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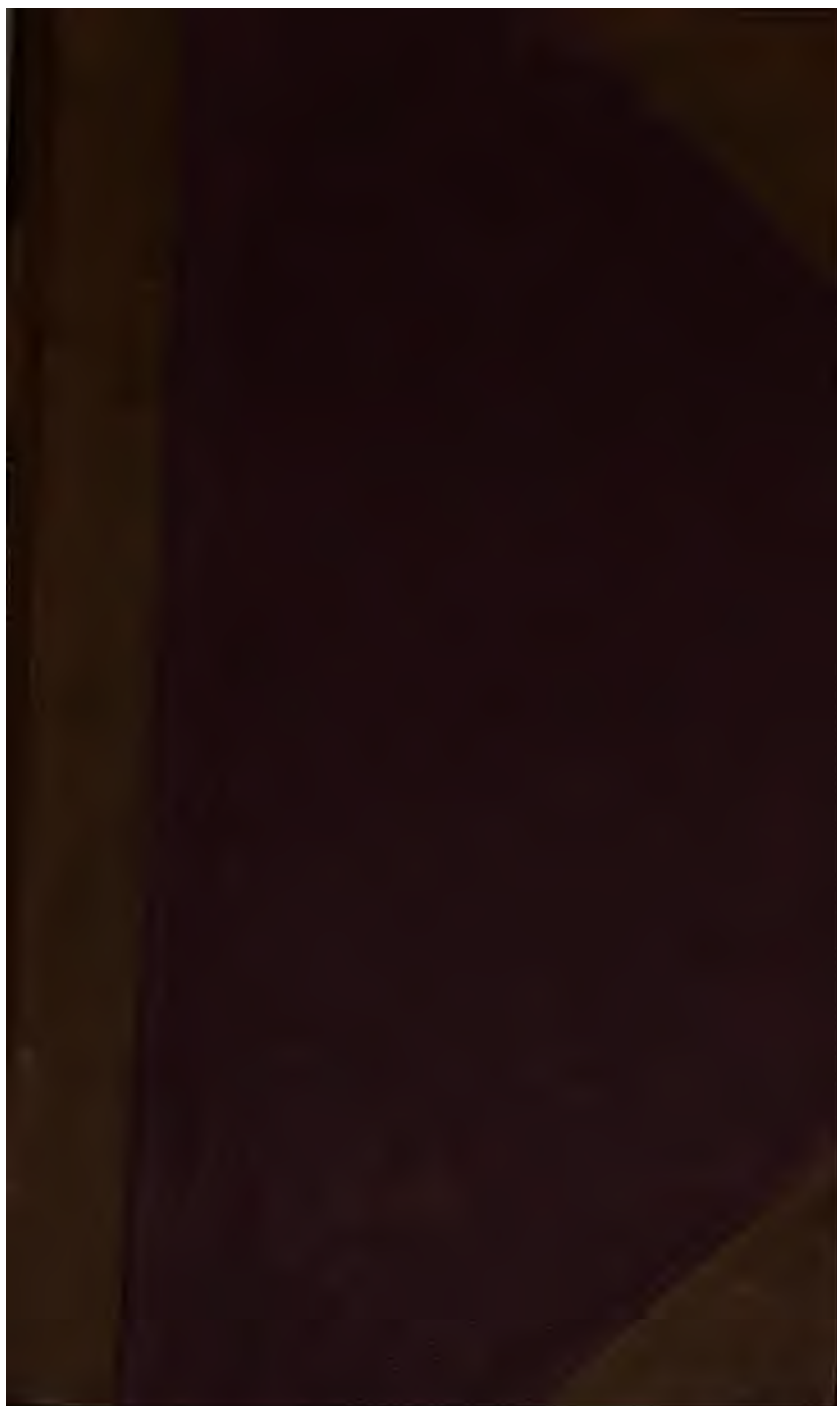
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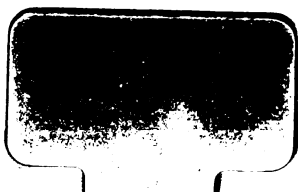
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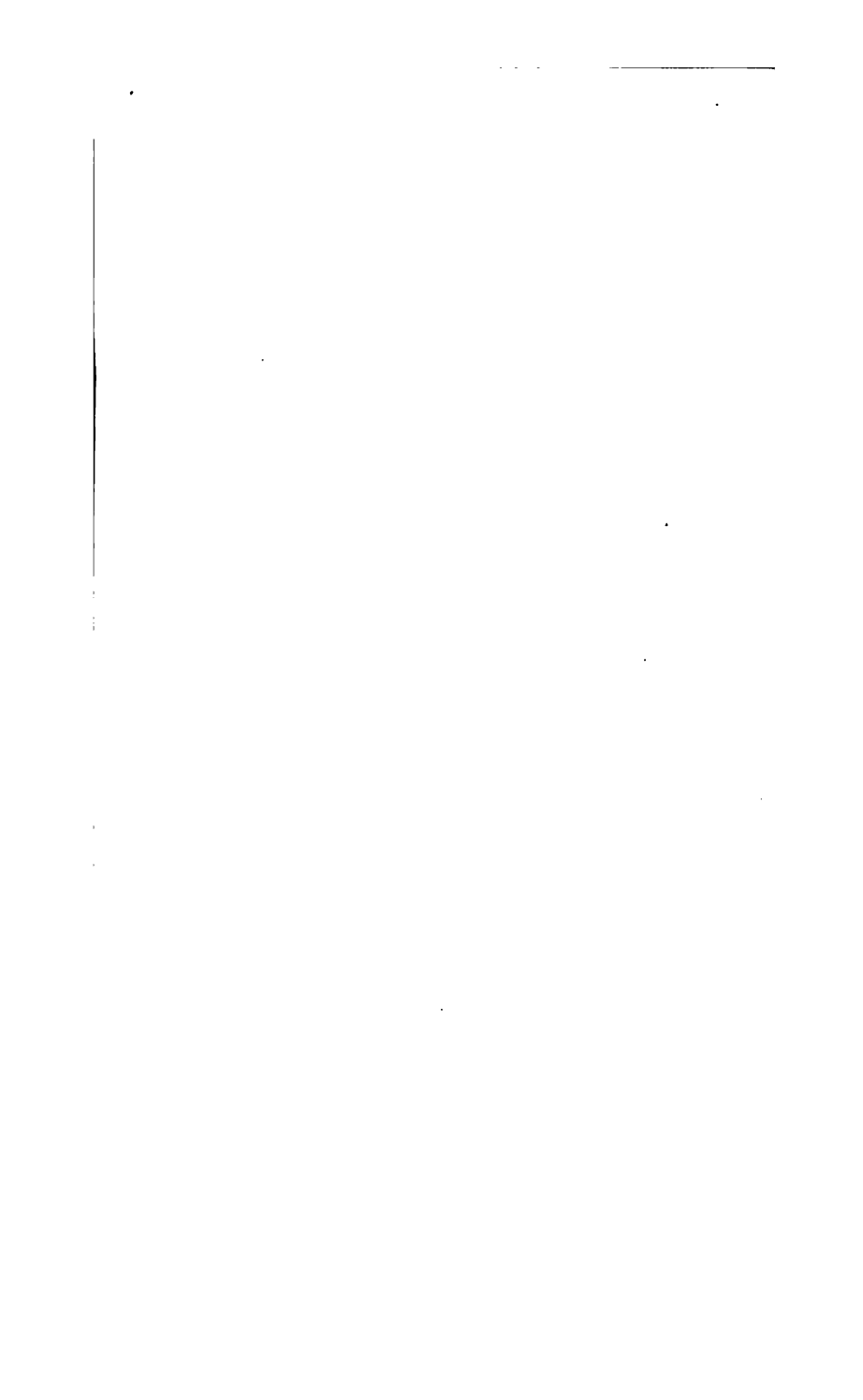
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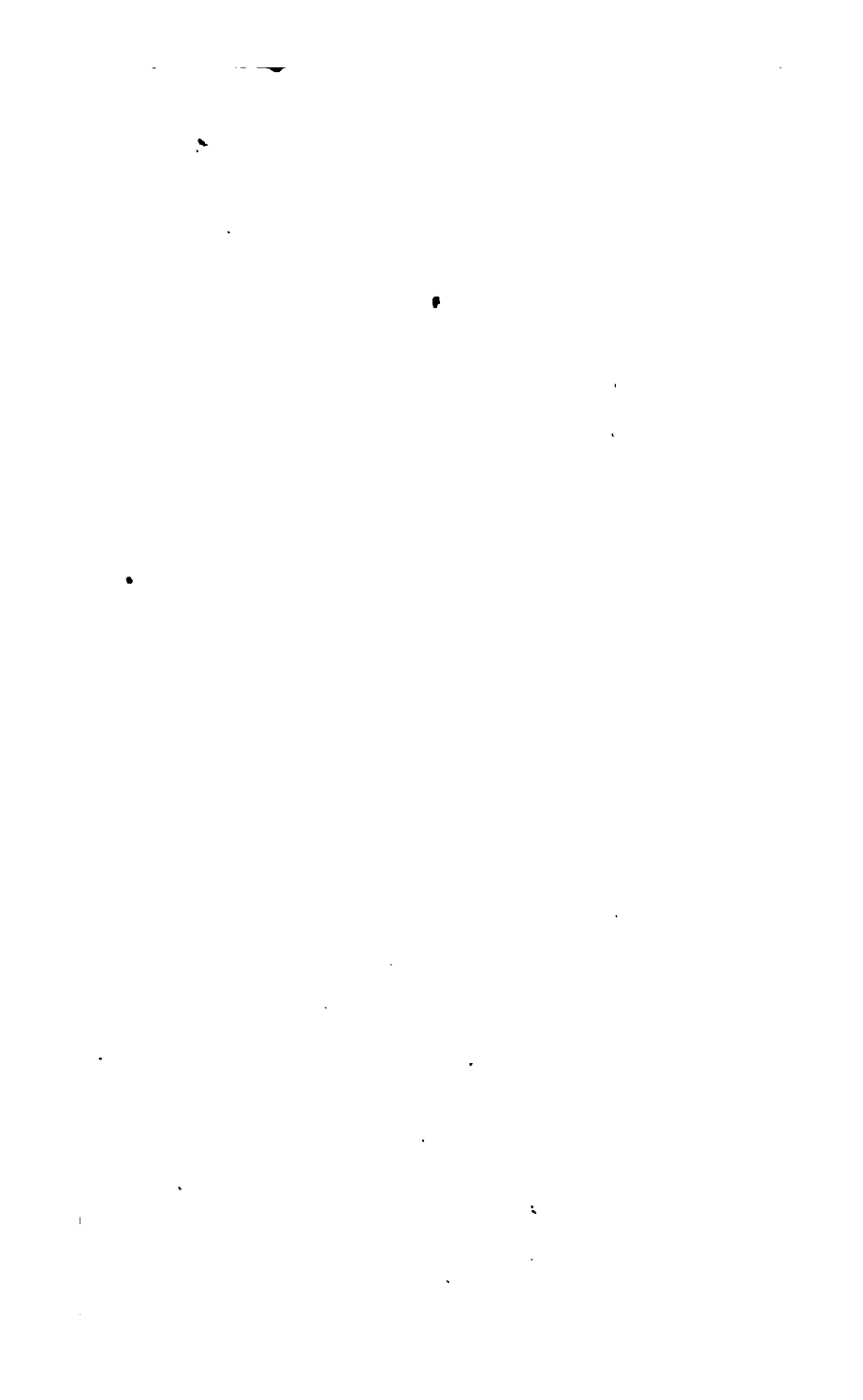


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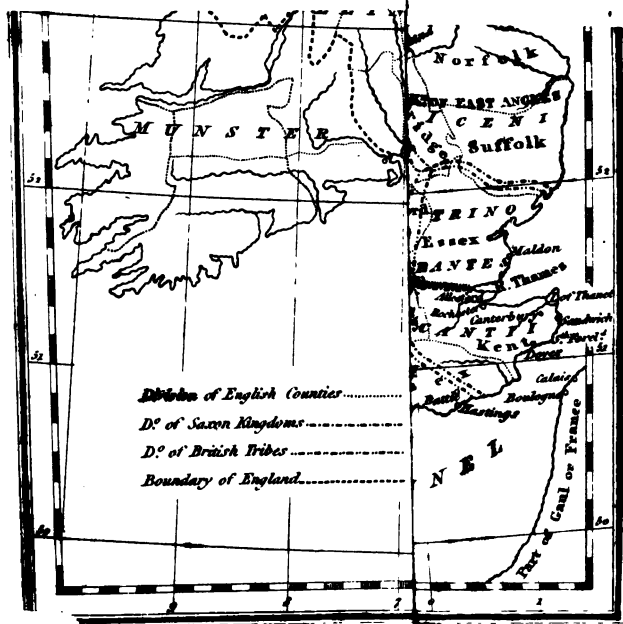












HISTORY OF ENGLAND,

IN WHICH IT IS INTENDED TO

CONSIDER MEN AND EVENTS

ON

CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES.

VOL. I.

EXTENDING

FROM THE EARLIEST PERIODS

TO THE

SIGNATURE OF MAGNA CHARTA.

BY A

CLERGYMAN OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

“Scripture gives us an account of the world, in this one single view, as God’s world.”—BISHOP BUTLER.

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PREFACE.

EVERY man capable of reflecting on what is going on around him, must have some desire to know how the state of things, which he sees, has grown up; or, in other words, what is the history of the past.

The Bible meets this natural curiosity with the most important information to which his thoughts can be directed; telling him, that man was created innocent, but seduced into disobedience.—That from this one source has proceeded all the vice, and all the misery under which *the whole creation groaned and travailed in pain together**, until the coming of Christ to redeem from condemnation such as, seeking the guidance of the Holy Ghost, *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and being led by the Spirit of God, receive the inestimable and elevated title of children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*, with whom they shall be glorified †.

Compared with the value of this information, every other subject of enquiry becomes vain and insignificant.

* Rom. viii. 22.

† Ibid. v. 4. 14. 16, 17.

Indeed, one who should hear it for the first time, and who knew nothing of the reception this knowledge generally meets with, would assuredly expect, that whoever heard these things, and believed them, would be so absorbed and elevated by the contemplation of them, that he could not descend again to any other subject of thought, unless it was to help him, in some way or other, to do what the leading of the Spirit might require of him; or to assist some fellow-creature in finding that light, whose salutary rays were cheering and enlivening his own path. And these considerations would carry him on from this great view of the general history of man, to desire such knowledge of the particular history of the country in which he dwells, as may prevent his being ignorant of any peculiar debt of gratitude for special instances of mercy shewn towards it, and enjoyed immediately, or in their consequences, by himself. He would be farther induced to make such enquiries from perceiving, that he had duties, as a member of the society in which it had pleased God to place him; which duties he could not properly fulfil, without knowing to what laws that society would justly require his submission;—what rights he was bound to assist that society, by all lawful means, in preserving:—and, more particularly, whether the Church established in his country for the service and honour of God, was well fitted for the promotion of those great ends;—in what respect it might need his prayers, or require his help towards its improvement;—how far, and in what way, he could promote its useful influence.

The compilers of our Liturgy, when they instruct us to pray, "O Lord arise, help us and deliver us," have bidden

us at the same time to say, "O Lord we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us the noble works that thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them." From this combination they seem to have expected, or at least they must be supposed to have wished to teach, that English fathers should tell their children what great things God hath ever continued to do for his Church, and what peculiar blessings he hath showered on this our country.

If this duty be neglected, people may yet be found willing to obey the occasional calls of their Sovereign, by observing national fasts and thanksgivings; because they are not disposed to deny that obedience is due to the King, and honour to God. But is it likely, or possible, that when thus summoned, they should plead before God with the same earnestness and fervour, as if they had in mind how former events had been ordered by Him for the benefit of their fathers; and that He might therefore, without presumption, be expected to let the prayers of the faithful again draw forth some special interference to complete those works of mercy?

But though individuals, like the Samaritan leper, have turned from walking with the unthankful crowd, to give glory to God, with heartfelt gratitude, for the wonderful blessings heaped upon this country, writers of English history have not taught their generation to consider what was done in the old time before them, as the effect of God's mercy. Some historians have been unhappily notorious for their hostility to Religion; or for an ungrateful and perverse blindness to the merits of the form of government

under which events have been made to place us. Nearly all have only differed from heathen historians by occasional expressions of respect for Christianity. Whilst they have confessed God with their lips, they have spoken of events, as if He had no share and no object in their arrangement; as if He took no part in the disposal of the world, unless when He is seen interrupting the order of nature by miraculous interference.

It can scarcely be necessary to observe how different this is from the language of Him who knew the Father, and spake of Him as always producing, by the exertion of His will, what we term the daily course of nature; saying, "He maketh the sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

If the worldly historian be a lover of the moral virtues, he will too certainly be found to make the general tenor of his observations lead to the subverting of the proper order of the two great commandments. Patriotism and benevolence towards man always stand, with him, before devotion to God and zeal for His service. But, in general, the historian does not even pretend to such an inflexible affection, even for morality, as to preclude him from preferring able policy and successful ambition, particularly if the latter be exercised at the expense of foreign nations, before scrupulous integrity. As for humble self-denial, or the piety, which afraid of giving power to worldly temptations, prays for permission to devote more tranquil and abundant leisure to preparation for appearing before God, they are never spoken of in history but with pity or contempt. The ordinary writer of history *calls the proud*

happy : yea, they that work wickedness, if their purposes were carried on boldly and skilfully, are set up on high for admiration *. The effect of such unscriptural views of men's conduct, and of events, is, too frequently, to make the student rise from a course of historical reading, impressed with the notion that religion is merely theoretical; what wise men will not, and conscience need not upbraid him for neglecting in practice, provided his inattention to its dictates be influenced by what he thinks good policy; and does not extend to what he calls gross offences.

That acute, and certainly not over-fastidious observer of human life, Dr. Paley, has made remarks of the same kind, on the evident tendency of such opinions as are read in the ordinary course of historical studies, and heard in ordinary worldly society, to communicate a corrupting and indelible taint to the sentiments of youth.

"The general course of education," he observes, "is much against religious seriousness, even without those who conduct education foreseeing or intending any such effect. Many of us are brought up with this world set before us, and nothing else. Whatever promotes this world's prosperity is praised; whatever hurts and obstructs and prejudices this world's prosperity is blamed; and there all praise and censure end.

"We see mankind about us in motion and action, but all these motions and actions directed to worldly objects. We hear their conversation, but it is all the same way.

* Malachi iii. 15.

“ And this is what we see and hear from the first. The views which are continually placed before our eyes regard this life alone, and its interests. Can it then be wondered at, that an early worldly-mindedness is bred in our hearts, so strong as to shut out heavenly-mindedness entirely ? In the contest which is always carrying on between this world and the next, it is no difficult thing to see what advantages this world has. One of the greatest of these advantages is, that it pre-occupies the mind ; it gets the first hold and the first possession. Childhood and youth, left to themselves, are necessarily guided by the senses ; and the senses are all on the side of this world. Meditation brings us to look towards a future life ; but then meditation comes afterwards. It only comes when the mind is already filled, and engaged, and occupied, nay, often crowded and surcharged with worldly ideas. It is not only therefore fair and right, but it is absolutely necessary to give to Religion all the advantages we can give it by dint of education ; for all that can be done is too little to set Religion upon an equality with its rival ; which rival is the world. A creature, which is to pass a small portion of its existence in one state, and that state preparatory to another, ought, no doubt, to have its attention constantly fixed upon its ulterior and permanent destination *.”

This statement is as strikingly just as it is dispassionate. It is to be feared that these impediments to a thorough devotedness to God will never cease to occur and to operate, till the prayer be fully heard and granted, which

* Paley's Sermons, Sermon. I. pp. 7, 8. Ed. 4.

asks that God's *kingdom* may come and be established; and that *His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Yet the weakest endeavours may, by God's blessing, destroy much of the pernicious influence of evils which man cannot remove. Under this conviction, and from a most anxious wish to do something towards rescuing unsuspecting youth from the snares laid in their way by such as *call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness*, the writer has been induced to resolve on offering his countrymen a History of England, in which all praise and censure will not be found to be distributed solely with reference to the tendency of actions to promote or obstruct worldly prosperity.

Bishop Butler has observed, that "Scripture gives us an account of the world, in this one single view, as God's world; by which it appears essentially distinguished from all other books, except such as are copied from it *." Such an imitation of the tone of the sacred penmen, the author trusts he cannot be wrong in proposing to himself, as the rule whereby to regulate his opinions of events and of public characters. He will endeavour, in forming his estimate of either, to think how they, who constantly regarded the world as God's world, would have spoken of what it becomes his duty to notice.

But though the writer may perceive what ought to be his object, and his manner of speaking, the defects of his predecessors are an awful warning to him to take heed himself, that the effect of the subjects which must engage

* Butler's Analogy, Part II. chap. vii.

his attention, be not to *overcharge his heart likewise with the cares of this life*. It may now seem to him quite as much a proof of a little as of a corrupt mind to be incapable of perceiving, that all which can be gained or lost of earthly treasures, of power or fame, is lighter than dust in the balance, when compared with the hopes of that glory in which they, who serve God faithfully, *shall reign for ever and ever when this earth and heaven are fled away*. But yet he reads, and believes, that instead of its being an easy thing to keep this infinite disproportion between the objects of a day and of eternity effectually present to the mind, *the Spirit of wisdom must be given, and the eyes of the understanding must be enlightened*, that man may be made capable of knowing *what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance*. For these blessings, therefore, he will feel it his urgent duty to seek; lest, whilst labouring to *please his neighbour for his good to edification*, his heart should become so estranged by worldly objects from communion with its Maker, as to wish to *hide itself from the presence of the Lord God*, when he shall say, *Where art thou?*

On the other hand, in the performance of his task, though it be undeniably the duty of every Christian writer, as it was that of the sacred penmen, to speak of facts with a fixed impression of the power and of the influence exercised by the King of kings, and Lord of lords, as from His throne beholding all the dwellers upon earth, the uninspired historian, instead of the certainty with which the purposes and the judgments of God are declared in Holy Writ, can only offer humble, and frequently erroneous con-

lectures as to the lesson which it was intended mankind should receive from God's suffering that to happen which we see, in any case, He has permitted.

Perhaps, too, of all the works which God hath wrought during certain periods of history, the most glorious in the sight of heaven may have been precisely those which elude the research of the historian. For the domestic virtues, and the affectionate yet humble love of God, which His grace has formed, and His blessing matured, are hidden from the public eye.

Men may have lived, willingly submitting to insult and oppression that they might literally comply with all their Saviour's words; but unless they have been religious martyrs whose firmness under the fear, or even in the midst of tortures, made their courage too manifest to be disputed, it will invariably be found that their character has been mistaken, and if noticed at all is held up to scorn. He who *having done well, and suffered for it, taketh that patiently*, must have had the Spirit of God poured out abundantly upon him, to make him thus victorious over temptation. But though this be *acceptable with God**, historians in general have felt no admiration for such characters; and therefore, where they have spoken of them, they have in contempt, or in ignorance of their exalted motives, confounded their conduct with the effects of cowardice, or with the behaviour of the mercenary wretch, who bears the injustice and the contumelies of his superiors in the hope of still making profit out of those who despise him. Details, which, if

* 1 Pet. ii. 20.

impartially given, the writer might have rejoiced over, as evidence of the triumphs of steadfast faith, are thus prevented from affording him that encouraging theme.

The reader is reminded of these impediments to an historian's doing full justice to what is excellent, not merely as some apology for what may be defective in the author's work, but that he may not be tempted to form too melancholy a view of the state in which God leaves a people who profess to serve Him. With the same view, it should be remembered that if two persons arrive at manhood with equal abilities and attainments, and the one follows the glittering prizes of ambition, whilst the other resigns himself to nursing an infirm parent, or training up a household, or a village, in the service of God; the first, in his efforts to rise in the world will polish and enrich every faculty calculated to dazzle beholders, or may be drawn on to crimes, which fill the page of history; whilst the second may grow in true wisdom and in grace as he increases in years, but history knows and says nothing of him. Hence, when the reader can discover but one character in the history of an age, on whom his eye may rest with any satisfaction, he may yet not unreasonably hope, that could the extent of God's mercy in saving from sin be laid open before him, as it was to the prophet, he too would know that even then also God had seven thousand servants who had not bowed the knee to the seducing Baal of their day. This reflection need not mislead any into considering good and bad governors and institutions as on a level. In Ahab's time they who had kept their faith were rare, though not so few as the desponding prophet feared; but in good Josiah's

reign it is said, *all present in Israel were made to serve, even to serve the Lord their God**.

But after every allowance for the omissions and misrepresentations in historical documents, with respect to what is truly excellent, the preponderance of guilt in the narrative will remain awfully prominent. It would be somewhat less so, if history was not mainly taken up with describing the conduct of the rich and great. Of them the Lord has told us, *how hardly shall such enter into the kingdom of God*†.

History, from beginning to end, confirms this painful remark. How happy if it thereby leads its readers to dread riches, rather than seek them; to pity, not to envy the great; to be thankful that the overpowering temptations, which make their being saved so near an impossibility‡, descend not upon all; instead of being angry and indignant, when they read that the kings, and the mighty of the earth, have given themselves up to work all iniquity with greediness.

But if he be saddened with the view of human guilt, the reader may find abundant consolation by gaining still more advanced views of the goodness of God. For, whilst the world is undoubtedly God's world, when contemplated as such it cannot but be seen to be in a state of almost universal rebellion against Him; and yet He has in every age given repeated proofs that his fatherly love is not quenched.

* 2 Chron. xxxiv. 33.

† Mark x. 2, 3.

‡ Ibid. x. 27.

It is history enough that in his own peculiar people, do the words of God's word never seem conspicuous there as that of England, and they have been regularly poured out at periods when it is most evident that national pride was not absent in their hearts or there as absent: thus con-
firming the readers of English history to acknowledge that they derived from His free bounty, and that to His merciful mercy alone is due all the good.

Our ancestors were lost in gross idolatry: while He came to them, and sent rather the light of the Gospel. "He saw their worshipers of idols, to whom they paid the service of idol and idolatry sacrifices. He made them the worshipers of Himself and His dearest Son; and made them to be taught to worship Him with an holy worship. But in a little time their sense forgot Him; and their devotions turned again to idolatry, the much remaining from which they had been delivered. They went deep into all the idols and presumptions, and iniquities of Popery, and bowed themselves again before graven images. Yet God again remembered them in mercy; and sent amongst them faithful witnesses, by whose preaching He called them once more to the acknowledgment of His holy word; and made the lot of our ancestors once more the imitation of business and ruin *."

And, as if all this were not enough, He has been beneficent in the choice of temporal gifts. He has made our valued form for us a Constitution, which is the envy of

* Bucer's Sermon before the Corporation of Trinity House

nations who cannot comprehend the superior value of our spiritual blessings ; and He has exalted the influence and the power of our Island till it extends into every quarter of the world.

God grant that the reader, whilst he learns *how great things the Lord hath done for us*, may also learn to love Him as a Benefactor, who is not, like man, unable to extend his regards at once to great things and small, but looks upon the humblest of his creatures with as unceasing attention as He watcheth over an empire ; and is as ready to save the most despised of those who put their trust in Him, *as to establish kingdoms*, and add unto them *excellent Majesty*.



HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

BOOK I.

BRITAIN PREVIOUS TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
SAXON HEPTARCHY.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

ENGLAND, Wales, and Scotland form together one island, called Great Britain. With these Ireland is intimately connected ; forming, now, part of the same kingdom, and being usually comprehended with them under the appellation of the British Isles.

The inhabitants of these highly favoured countries have great reason to be thankful for *the goodly heritage* which their Creator has allotted to them. For whilst one portion of the earth, called the torrid zone, is exposed to violent, and long continued heat, which produces, besides many other inconveniences, harassing clouds of insects and numbers of venomous reptiles ; and two other divisions, the frigid zones, are so cold that bread corn, that staff of life, cannot be raised within their limits ; the British Isles are placed in one of those divisions which bear the name of temperate zones. The name of *temperate* has been given to these portions of the globe, because, lying between the frigid and torrid zones, their inhabitants suffer neither the intense cold which prevails on one side of them, nor the excessive heat

which is felt on the other ; but live under the climate most favourable to the developement of the human frame, and to its preservation in a healthy state. To the advantage of being placed in the temperate zone, may be added that of living on an island. For the neighbourhood of the sea tends to correct and soften the seasons ; making the summers cooler, and the winters warmer than in those countries of the continent, whose climate our's would otherwise, being in the same latitude, resemble. But there is much more than this to be thankful for, in the insular position of our native land. For, whilst other countries are only separated from their enemies in time of war by rivers, which may be crossed in a few minutes ; or by mountains which must have some openings ; the sea keeps all the enemies of these islands at a distance in war ; whilst, in peace, it affords a cheaper, more speedy, and more universal means of access to other nations, than the most favourably situated continental state can possibly enjoy.

The blessings just alluded to, are obviously such as flow from the free bounty of God. But the history of England will exhibit many still more valuable instances of His mercy. We shall there see how much has been done by the counsels of wise and good men, under God's blessing, to make the people of this land happy in their intercourse with each other, and happier still in serving Him with a pure worship. Human pride might lead us to ascribe to human prudence the merit of having procured for us these great advantages, in so eminent a degree ; instead of gratefully reflecting, that every wise device must have been suggested by Him through whom kings rule, and nations flourish, and that its successful execution must have been his gift ;—but history will prove the folly, as well as ingratitude, of giving to man's wisdom the praise due to God. History will compel us to see, that some of the most signal and

permanent blessings which we enjoy, have been brought about, not in consequence of the cunningly devised councils of sages and politicians, but evidently and undeniably by the disappointment and failure of their best intended 'schemes. For God hath not unfrequently chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence*. In the history of the Jewish nation, even where events might, otherwise, have appeared to have been guided solely by the will of man, the direct influence of God was rendered manifest, by his having declared long beforehand, that He would make things come to pass just as they eventually did. But the renown of kings or conquerors, the vain pomps and glories of the world, have no value in the sight of God. It was not in consequence of any natural importance belonging to the Jews, as a nation, that God avowed his purpose of exercising a marked interference in their affairs; but, because He had chosen them to be his peculiar people, amongst whom he would preserve the worship of his holy name, and because He had solemnly announced this choice to their forefathers. *The Lord thy God hath chosen thee, said Moses to the Jews, to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor chuse you, because ye were more in number than any people, (for ye were the fewest of all people) but because the Lord loveth you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand.* His choice, and the avowal of his choice, were reasons

* 1 Cor. i. 27.

for declaring that he would specially interfere in their affairs; and the proof that he did thus interfere, whether made evident by something obviously miraculous in the manner of his interference, or by its being the fulfilment of some prophecy, was intended to promote his glory, and encourage their obedience, by shewing that He was faithful who promised. To this conclusion Moses leads them in the words which immediately follow those last quoted, *Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him, and keep His commandments.* As, therefore, it was not the political importance, but the effect of certain transactions on God's chosen people, which occasioned his avowal of special interference in those transactions, and its previous announcement; so it was not to be expected that He would speak, by His prophets, of the mightier battles, or more extensive revolutions which have occurred amongst other nations, unless they were to have some important influence on the welfare of His church. Such was to be the effect of the extension of the Roman power; and as the invasion of England by the Romans is the first known event in English history, the introduction to that history will properly comprehend an enquiry how this invasion formed a part of God's known purposes; and with what merciful intention He allowed a warlike but wicked people, to commence and succeed in their unprovoked attacks on the shores of our native land.

It was by the prophet Daniel that God had declared that mighty kingdoms should spread over large portions of the earth, before the establishment of the spiritual kingdom of his Son. These kingdoms were the Chaldean, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. The dominion which each of these nations in its turn exercised over Palestine and Egypt, was a part of the intention of God, discovered long before to Noah, when he foretold the superiority to which

the children of Shem and Japheth should attain above the children of Ham. For the two first of these ruling nations were descendent of Shem, and the two last of Japheth; whilst Palestine and Egypt were originally peopled and possessed by the children of Ham. But the prophet Daniel had a more immediate interest in the fate of these four great kingdoms, as successively having in their apparent disposal the fate of Judæa; and becoming, with different degrees of obstinacy and bitterness, persecutors of the faithful servants of God.

He was therefore commissioned to console those who trusted in the Lord, that he would deliver them, by announcing, that, irresistible as the power of these successive conquerors might appear to the men who groaned under the weight of their oppression, God had fixed limits to the authority and duration of each. And, that the rise of the fourth kingdom, especially, might be viewed with joy instead of terror, as the forerunner of a most happy consummation, Daniel was inspired to declare, that, before its close, *the God of heaven should set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.* The prophet again confirms the assertion, that His kingdom should not, like those which had preceded it, give way, in its turn, to fresh conquerors; adding, *the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.* But the elevation of the fourth great power, the Roman empire, was not only to be an acceptable signal for those who carefully observed the signs of the times, that the kingdom of God was at hand; it was to be a mighty instrument for facilitating the conquests of Christ's disciples, over territories which had been long subject to Satan. As a means of effecting the above important purpose, God had given to the Romans qualities and habits admirably adapted to make them both indefatigable and successful, in extending their empire;

whilst many circumstances, which naturally accompanied the establishment of their power over the nations they had subdued, became predisposing causes, rendering it easier to teach and fix the Christian faith in those countries than it would otherwise have been.

The Roman people were brave, and their leaders ambitious. They glowed with the most ardent patriotism, without feeling any general benevolence; the freedom which they enjoyed being very favourable to the production of the former, whilst the ferocity of their favourite amusements effectually destroyed all tendency to the latter. They had sufficient love of justice to obtain such a reputation for it as made those who were liable to the capricious violence of a barbarous despot rejoice in seeing their armies advance; but not sufficient to withhold them from attempting any conquest for want of a fair pretext for war. The necessity of popular approbation made their government anxious to support its expenses by the fruits of invasion, rather than by levying any regular tribute on its own citizens; and the same necessity made those who had influence fear to place authority in any but able hands. Such were the circumstances under which God permitted the Roman character to be formed; and they were enough to make them at once a restless and a victorious people. But, as their form of government gave no ambitious man the elevation which it encouraged him to aspire to, till he had struggled in popular assemblies for eminence above numerous rivals; and as all considerable military command, as well as civil authority, could only be obtained by first winning the applause of the people; they who aimed at such distinctions, as powerful minds have generally been too greedy in pursuing, were obliged to sustain an arduous intellectual contest in the city, as well as to show themselves bold, and hardy, and prudent, in the field. Hence, while

many received a large share of political instruction from the mere habit of watchfully observing the conduct of those who were competitors for their approbation, and these were constantly striving to increase their own mental resources by every means within their reach, that they might be seen to be pre-eminent in argument or eloquence, and were studying the mind of man, that they might learn how to lead and controul him, the whole nation rose in the scale of intelligence far above the surrounding people. Their wisdom bore, indeed, no marks of a heavenly origin; for it was neither *pure*, nor *peaceable*, nor *gentle*, nor *abounding in mercy*. But it was such wisdom as the children of this world might be expected to value and excel in; teaching men to follow their own ends with peculiar dexterity; adding to the power of the ambitious, and to the luxuries of the indolent; storing the mind with precepts and subtle devices for use in the toil after advancement; and adding the pleasures of imagination to the coarser gratifications of a savage. If the advantages which their wisdom procured were thus worldly, they were but so much the better suited to the comprehension, and adapted to excite the desires, of the people who submitted to the Roman arms. And, as the barbarian, who felt his conquerors' superiority, was permitted, by the laws of Rome, to aspire to becoming their rival in honourable, but peaceful, contests, he eagerly sought after the attainments which constituted, at once, so visible and so desirable a part of their superiority; whilst they were freely communicated to him by the victors, as likely to strengthen the bonds of his allegiance, by amalgamating his thoughts and pursuits with their own. Thus a considerable degree of civilization rapidly followed the course of the Roman arms; and, as the indulgence of curiosity, and a tendency to search into the mysterious hopes and fears of another life, have always occupied a promi-

ment place amongst the pleasures of imagination, the literature of Rome soon contained several distinguished works, in which the authors had detected and exposed the weakness of the popular superstition; at the same time that the evident failure of all the efforts which their own powerful minds could make to arrive at truth and certainty, proved that something more than human wisdom was necessary to solve that important and awful question which will press upon the thoughts of man, as soon as he has risen sufficiently above the mere animal life of a savage to turn his contemplations upon himself.

The blessings of the Christian covenant, the *glad tidings* of the Gospel of peace, were proclaimed to the world by the Apostles and their followers at the time, as God had announced it should be, when the Roman empire had taken its widest range. And the advancement of civilization among its ruder subjects, with the diffusion, amongst the more enlightened, of a spirit of enquiry, (which shook the old systems of idolatry, and excited a longing it could not satisfy for the information Christian teachers came to offer) must have been favourable to the propagation of Christianity over its extensive dominions; which, perhaps, comprehended half mankind*. Instead, too, of the difficulty of teaching elevated and spiritual truths in barbarous tongues, scarcely containing terms for expressing more than the simple wants, the rough pursuits, and coarse pleasures of savages, the first missionaries of the Gospel found that the Roman arms, as if with the intention of facilitating their labours, had spread the use of two languages, the Latin and Greek, most admirably adapted to all the purposes of persuasion and instruction. The gift of tongues, indeed, miraculously enabled the first teachers of

* It seems very doubtful whether America was as yet inhabited by men.

Christianity to speak the language of any people they chose to address; and to do this without the delay of previously learning that language. But though this gift put them at once into complete possession of all the words of a barbarous tongue, it must still have remained impossible adequately to express, in that tongue, ideas for which, from its own poverty, it wanted names. Now, though the variety of languages naturally spoken by the numerous distinct nations subject to Rome had not been entirely superseded by the Latin or Greek, yet either the one or the other of these two became familiarly known in every province; and whatever was written in these languages could be read by all those, at least, who had leisure for thought and study; whose influence must gradually lead their more ignorant countrymen in their train.

Another very considerable advantage to the rising cause of Christianity, resulting from the victories of Rome, was the abundant intercourse to which they gave facilities, or which they directly occasioned, between nations previously unknown to each other, and tribes whose petty hostilities would have made of every frontier a barrier to the farther progress of the preachers of peace. It is probable that the intercourse which commerce now produces between independent countries could, in that state of civilization, only have been brought about by conquest. It was, besides, a part of the Roman policy to transfer whole armies to perform the duties of a vast garrison in provinces widely separated from their native country; these soldiers carried with them the opinions they had learned to adopt in their earlier home; and the leisure, not to say the tediousness, of their permanent and generally inactive camps, enabled and led them to do more to diffuse their opinions around them than a merchant would at the ports to which he makes his busy and transitory visits.

But, doubtless, amongst the various means by which God made the elevation of the Roman power subservient to the propagation of Christianity, no one was so incontestably important, in the end, as this, that as soon as the capital and sovereign of this vast empire were won over to the faith of Christ, the establishment of His Church, in all its numerous and extensive provinces, was carried, as it were, by that one victory. Then began to be fulfilled the words of the promise which Jehovah had made *to Him whom man despised, to Him whom the nation abhorred, to a servant of rulers. Kings shall see Him rise up, princes also shall worship Him**.

If the brief notice here taken of the effects naturally flowing from these different pre-disposing causes, in favour of a wide reception of the Gospel, should still seem not to have clearly established their importance, history sets before us such a striking contrast between the result produced in those countries where their united operation was experienced, and in those where they were wholly absent, as would alone be sufficient to lead us to trace the hand of God, in the wisdom which prepared them. For history tells us, that the Christian religion was regularly established in every province of the Roman empire; and fixed on such firm ground that, though it may have been deplorably perverted, it never became less than the paramount religion in any of those provinces, so long as they continued to be parts of that empire; whilst, on the other hand, neither the Apostles, nor any of their immediate successors, appear to have planted any permanent Church beyond the bounds of the Roman empire.

The people of this country have, therefore, exceeding reason to bless God that their ancestors found themselves compelled to submit to becoming a part of that empire. *God commendeth His love*

* Isaiah xlix. 7. Improved Translation.

towards us, in that while our fathers were yet sinners, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; He thus devised the means of making them partakers of His promise in Christ, by bringing them to the knowledge of the Gospel, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When the time is fulfilled, that God will have His designs accomplished, the vices of the wicked are made to serve His purposes as effectually as the willing obedience and zealous devotion of those who seek to do Him honour. For this reason He saith of a conqueror, he is *the rod of mine anger; and the staff in his hand is mine indignation. I will give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Yet his heart thinketh not so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations.*

Such an one was Julius Cæsar, who had for some years commanded the Roman armies in Gaul*; where, to gratify his restless ambition, he had attacked nation after nation, till it became his wicked boast that he had plundered and ravaged a thousand towns, had slain a million of his fellow-creatures, and made slaves of a million more. Nor could he allege the ordinary excuse, of the right of defending one's country, for this amazing destruction of human happiness and human life. His wars were wars of aggression; made, almost in every case, for the express purpose of robbing the people whom he attacked of their property and liberty. Indeed one Roman senator had such a just sense of the wickedness of these unprovoked wars, that, when Cæsar's friends proposed that the Roman senate should order solemn processions in compliment to his victories, this

* Under this name were comprehended the countries since called Lombardy, Switzerland, France, and Flanders.

honest man said, they ought rather to deliver Cæsar up to the people whom he had treacherously attacked; that they might take vengeance for the crime, and not leave it unatoned, to bring a curse on their city. But his countrymen loved military glory too much to prefer justice before it. They gave their wicked general additional powers; and he was ordained to become their scourge also. But he was politic, as well as bold; and therefore, before commencing a direct attack on the long-established liberties of his native land, he thought it necessary to make himself master of still more extensive conquests; to form an army accustomed to serve him, without feeling any affection for home; and to collect wealth, which he might distribute in bribes to those whose duty it was to expose and prevent his treacherous projects. So, when he had overrun and plundered nearly the whole of Gaul, and arrived on its northern shore, he cast his eyes on the opposite coast of Britain.

It was said that the merchants of Tyre had long carried on a profitable trade with the British for tin; and Cæsar had been deceived into a belief, that a valuable pearl fishery was carried on by the natives. At any rate, he thought the inhabitants would make able-bodied soldiers, or slaves. The hopes of plunder were enough to determine him to invade an island, whose inhabitants could neither compare in arms nor discipline with his own troops. But whilst he was making preparations for conveying his army across the British channel, he endeavoured to obtain such accounts as could be relied on, about a country, as yet, very little known to the civilized world. The merchants, to whom he applied for information respecting the British Isles, were acquainted with little more than the coast opposite to France; the savage state of the people, in the interior, having afforded them no inducements to penetrate far inland. By help of the knowledge which Cæsar him

self, and others, afterwards acquired, we are able, however, to give a better description than he could then obtain, though still a very imperfect one, of the country and people he was bent on invading. The geographical outline of the British isles was, indeed, the same then as now; but the face of the country has since undergone almost as great a change as its population.

The island of Great Britain is about 600 miles in length, and 300 at its greatest breadth, and is computed to contain above 56 millions of acres; of which England comprehends rather more than 32, Wales nearly 5, and Scotland nearly 19, millions. At the present day twenty-five of the thirty-two millions of acres which England contains are under cultivation, either as corn-fields, pastures, gardens, or orchards, affording food to numerous neatly built villages, and large and populous towns; to which the produce of the soil is conveyed by roads and canals, intersecting the country in every direction. But in Cæsar's time, though the cultivation of corn had been partially introduced on the southern coast of England, it was unknown to the ruder inhabitants of the interior. They lived on the produce of their herds, assisted by an occasional addition from such of the few native animals as they could catch, or by the still less substantial relief which acorns, wild berries, and roots now thought uneatable, might at certain seasons afford. A great part of the country was covered by forests. There were none of those drains which cultivation has introduced to carry off the waste water from every field; nor of those embankments which keep the floods within their bounds till they reach the sea, or prevent high tides from extending over the low grounds near the shore. Hence every spot abounding in springs would become a rank and deep morass; and when floods rushing down from the hills, or poured in by the sea, had overspread a valley whose outlet was nar-

row, or choked up by obstructions, long accumulating and never removed, the valley became a lake; till the slow retreat of the water, and a summer's sun, turned it into an impassable bed of mud, generating the corrupt atmosphere which keeps down a savage population by fevers and pestilence. In valleys which are now very rarely covered with water, and that only for a few hours, or days at most, fleets of such vessels as had crossed the German Ocean are known to have sailed and harboured for months, in times later, much, than Cæsar's; and the wrecks of these vessels have been dug up in modern days, where the English farmer now sows his corn, without any fear of its being carried off, or even injured, by an inundation.

It is evident, that, had the country been more healthy than it could be in so neglected a state, the number of inhabitants which such scanty and irregular sources of food could maintain, must have been very limited. The population of Great Britain was, in 1821, above fourteen millions; of England alone, nearly eleven millions and a half. If, when Cæsar invaded this island, its soil and its shores maintained as many inhabitants as modern European Russia supports on the same space, England might then have had a population of a million and a half; and so little is made of the natural resources of a country by a nation of herdsmen, hunters, and fishermen, and so much of what they do make of those resources is wasted, that the Britons could scarcely have been so numerous as even this mode of computation would allow.

How long our island had been inhabited before the period at which British history regularly commences, is unknown; but we are able to trace, in heathen history, the progress of a people, called, by the Greeks, Cimmerians, and by the Romans Cimbri; who very possibly bore this name as descendants of Gomer, the son of Japheth, and who

gradually took possession of the country before them, till they reached and occupied the north-western parts of Europe; including the British isles. The great extent of territory over which these people spread themselves, was an early fulfilment of God's declaration, that He 'would enlarge Japheth.' We farther find, that a race called Celts, Galatians *, or Gauls, are, about the same time, spoken of as possessing the same countries; and we gather that whilst Celts, Galatians, or Gauls, were intended for the same name, but differently pronounced and formed by different nations in speaking of them †, Cimmerians was a more general name belonging to the same people; just as Judæi, Jews, Juifs are well known to be different imitations of the same name, whilst the people thus called shared the name of Israelites with the other descendants of Jacob. The name which the Greeks modified into the word Cimmerii, and the Romans into Cimbri, is still borne by the Welsh; who call themselves Cumry, and their language Cumraig. The same name is retained in the word Cumberland, which is known to be so called from the people who remained masters of that country long after the remaining districts had been subdued by the Saxons. On the other hand, the Scotch Highlanders call themselves Gael, and their language Gaelic; which words differ little from Gaul and Gallic, the acknowledged designations of the continental Celts.

Thus may the two great national appellations, Cimmerians and Celts, be still traced amongst us. Nor are satisfactory proofs wanting, at this day, that they were the same people; for the Welsh, the

* It was to a colony of these people, settled in Asia, that St. Paul wrote the letter which bears their name.

† Celts and Galatai, Cimmer and Gomer, will be understood to be more nearly the same word, when the letter C is pronounced hard. The Romans called those Galli, whom the Greeks called Galatai.

Scotch Highlanders, and the native Irish, people between whom, for many centuries, there was little or no communication, still speak dialects of the same tongue. The dialects thus preserved in the remote or inaccessible districts, which have always been occupied by the unmixed descendants of the first inhabitants, are, moreover, quite unconnected with any of the languages imported by the subsequent invaders of these islands.

But though the Britons, whether called Celts or Cumry, were derived from one common stock, they were divided into many tribes, under distinct and independant chieftains. As is usual with barbarous nations, they were perpetually harassing each other with the robber-like atrocities of a petty warfare. Their manners displayed a state of society not farther advanced in civilization than the North American savages of the present day. Yet the inhabitants of the southern coasts, amongst whom the natives of Kent are spoken of most favourably, had gained, by their intercourse with the continent, the knowledge of some arts, with which the unmixed Celts of the interior were not acquainted. Though the latter lived on what their cattle supplied, they had not discovered that milk could be formed into cheese. Their cloathing owed as little to the improving power of well-directed industry as their diet; consisting of the untanned skins of the animals on which they had fed. Persons of considerable rank, however, had rings and other ornaments of gold, and wore a garment nearly resembling the present Scotch tartan. All stained their bodies with woad, and painted or tattooed on their skins the figures of animals, to make themselves appear the more horrible in battle. Their habitations seem to have been circular huts, constructed of reeds or clay, and their chief towns were formed by clearing a space in some wood, within which they could fold their cattle, and erect a number of these huts. The

trees immediately around were cut down, and so arranged as to enclose the whole with a strong fence, to which the farther protection of a ditch was sometimes added.

The Celtic superstitions were of a cruel and sanguinary nature. Having *changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.* Where He bestows not the sanctifying influence of His Holy Spirit, the natural man soon betrays the unhappy tendencies which belong to his fallen state. The whole train of domestic virtues, those which, of all temporal blessings, have the largest share in softening the sorrows, and sweetening the joys of life, were all banished by a degrading custom, which established a community of women among ten or twelve men, fathers, sons, and brothers. Thus did they, *working that which is unseemly, receive in themselves this sad recompense of their error.* The sources of generosity, benevolence, and charity, were equally poisoned by their priests, who did not merely fall short of teaching the divine rule, *Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them;* but taught the precisely opposite doctrine, that man fearing pain or death, might therefore torture or murder his fellow men; and that their gods would reward those deeds of cruelty which the God of gods hath declared, He will surely punish. Hence if a powerful man, or chieftain was sick, and felt some natural dread that his sins cried out for vengeance against him, instead of repenting and amending, he was led on, by his blind and wicked teachers, to add another offence of the deepest atrocity to all he had done before; causing an image of immense size to be constructed in wicker work, in the body and limbs of which he had living men enclosed; and then consuming the unhappy engaged wretches with fire, as a means of conciliating his gods. It is as-

serted that thieves, and other public offenders, were the ordinary victims in these horrible sacrifices ; but it is also confessed, that, in want of such, innocent men were added to fill up the number. As slavery was, in all probability, the punishment of most offences, it may not unreasonably be inferred from this account, that the miserable creatures devoted to suffer these expiatory torments, were, in reality, the slaves of the person for whom the sacrifice was offered ; who, whilst he naturally preferred losing his worst slaves, would yet fill up the hideous image with any others, if wanted.

Other superstitions of the same people rather mark the folly and blindness of idolatry, than its malignity. Of this description was their veneration for the misseltoe. As this plant, which fixes its hidden roots within the bark of some tree, has no immediate connection with the earth, and seems to shoot forth unsown, the Britons thought it of celestial origin. Even the tree on which it grew was viewed with awful respect, as having been honoured by the visit of some god, who had planted there his favourite shrub. But of all trees the oak was most revered, their priests being called druids, from the British name for an oak ; hence, when the misseltoe was discovered growing on the oak, the two objects of superstition exercised their united force on these poor deluded heathens. If the discoverer was wealthy enough to be able to procure two white bulls, a druid attended, clad in a white garment, and climbing the tree, he with a golden knife pruned off the misseltoe, which was to be caught below in a white woollen cloth. The bulls were then sacrificed ; and the misseltoe, thus obtained, was supposed to be endued with miraculous healing powers.

The druids were not only priests, but judges ; and if any person refused to abide by their decisions, they had such influence, that all his fellow-countrymen avoided him as an accursed person. A class

possessing such power were sure to claim and obtain important privileges ; and accordingly, we learn that they paid no tribute to the chieftain of their nation, and were exempt from serving in war. The Romans were impressed with a notion that these priests of a rude people had some mysterious knowledge to impart ; but the wisdom which ended in looking to the misseltoe for the preservation of health, and to the effect of human sacrifices for lengthening life, must have been as silly as it was wicked. Whilst the idolatrous priests of Greece, Egypt, and India, were capable of conceiving the plans of temples, at the sight of which the modern traveller admires the beauty and the magnificence of their construction, till he is tempted to forget how offensive to God was the purpose to which they were devoted,—the science of the druids only exhibited itself in piling, or poising, one fragment of rock upon another. At Stonehenge in Wiltshire, there still remains what is called a druidical temple. It consists of a double circle of enormous stones, fixed upright in the ground, and crossed by others, so as to form an enclosure, consisting, as it were, of so many gigantic door-cases brought together. This was probably the greatest of the druids' works ; but the spectator, whilst he sighs over the patient perseverance, of the unhappy slaves of superstition, whose painful toil he scarcely knows how to appreciate, sees no evidence of taste, and very little of invention, in the mind which projected so laborious a task.

Another class of persons must be mentioned, because their name has been dignified by its later use. The bards were the ballad-singers, who lived by flattering the petty chieftain for his brute strength, and merciless bravery ; or by amusing the vacant hours of the listless savage, with such idle tales as suited his depraved and coarse mind. When we find this name given to, and adopted by, the refined poets of an intellectual and Christian age, we are

led to attach such ideas to the title as are very unsuitable to the character to which it originally belonged, and forget what the flatterer or buffoon of the ignorant pagan Briton must have been.

CHAPTER II.

Conquest of the greater part of Britain by the Romans, and Introduction of Christianity.

SUCH was the people, and such the country, where the guilty ambition of a Roman general, who had no better design than to rob a weak nation, and to meditate treachery against his own native land, was about to prepare a highly-favoured abode for human wisdom, and political power, for enlightened and fervent piety. Not that he was destined to gain for himself worldly honour by entirely subduing the Britons. His invasion produced, apparently, very little effect; but though it did not place Britain, at that time, amongst the actual possessions of the Romans, it did enough, by leading thither the Roman arms, to stimulate the vanity of Cæsar's successors to complete the conquest, though their general policy led them to decline any farther extensions, in such a remote quarter of their unwieldy empire.

For the invasion of Britain, Cæsar thought it sufficient to collect a force not exceeding 8000 infantry, and 1000 horse; and having disposed of the former on board eighty transports in the harbour of Calais, he set sail without waiting for his cavalry, which had been sent to a neighbouring port for embarkation.

It was about one o'clock in the morning of the 26th of August, in the 55th year before the Christian æra, that an expedition, which was to draw such important consequences in its train, took its depar-

ture from the French coast; and before noon it arrived under the cliffs of Dover. To prevent, if practicable, the Britons from opposing his invasion, Cæsar had endeavoured to deceive them into submission, by sending before him Comius, a neighbouring Gallic chieftain, who was ordered to invite them to become the allies of the Romans; an invitation which, he was farther to say, it was Cæsar's intention to offer in person. But the Britons understood sufficiently that alliance meant subjection, and the surrender of their sons to perish far from home, in the Roman armies; so they put Comius in chains as a spy, and drew near to the coast in numbers, as men determined to defend their country. Cæsar, therefore, beheld the heights about Dover covered with a hostile multitude, and saw it would be imprudent to attempt a landing, where the boldness of the shore put it in the power of any unarmed savage to crush his best soldiers under stones hurled down from those lofty cliffs. This induced him to cast anchor till three o'clock, by which time the tide as well as the wind became favourable for doubling the South Foreland, and his fleet, having collected round him, received his orders to move in that direction. The Britons anxiously watched, and followed his progress along their shores; whilst Cæsar, having arrived opposite the flat coast about Sandwich, proceeded, without farther loss of time, to disembark his troops. It was not necessary to incur any delay, by transferring the men into boats, to convey them to the beach; for the Roman vessels were of such small burden, that Cæsar had been necessitated to employ a transport for every hundred men. It was easy, therefore, to run them so close in upon the shore, that the men, leaping from their decks into the sea, found themselves only breast high in the water. Yet, brave and well trained as the Roman soldiers were, many of them shrunk from encountering the difficulty of struggling through the surge, exposed

to the darts of their enemies, and liable to be suffocated in the waves under the Britons, for they rode on horseback into the sea to strike or trample down their invaders. The hesitation of his soldiers did not escape the notice of their sagacious commander, who immediately ordered his galleys, which he had equipped with archers, slingers, and machines for casting volleys of darts or stones, to row along the shore, and endeavour to frighten back the Britons, by pouring in upon them a shower of these various missiles. This produced considerable effect. It was at this time that a standard bearer called out aloud, "Leap down, my comrades, if you wish not to surrender your eagle to the enemy. I shall, assuredly, do my duty to our country and general." The next moment he plunged into the sea with his eagle, the national ensign of the Romans, and advanced with it amongst the enemy. Dreading the disgrace of losing their eagle, every soldier in the same vessel rushed after him into the sea; and the example was immediately followed from every transport in sight. Still it was not without a desperate struggle that the Romans were enabled to push their way, and form upon the beach. As soon as that was effected they found themselves in possession of the superiority which necessarily belongs to veteran soldiers over an undisciplined, though warlike, population. Having, however, no cavalry, the Romans were unable to pursue the natives in their retreat, and found it necessary to entrench themselves on the spot where they had made good their landing.

As the Britons had endeavoured to prevent the invasion of their country, by sending to Cæsar, while he was yet in Gaul, to remove any causes of complaint which he might allege against them, so, after this day's ineffectual resistance, they offered hostages and compliance with his demands. To these offers Cæsar had the effrontery to reply, that

he had reason to complain, that, after having first professed to wish for peace, they should, *without any cause, have made war upon him* ; but that he would pardon their imprudence ; and bade them bring their hostages. Some were, accordingly, immediately placed in his hands, with a promise that others should be sent in on their arrival from distant districts. In the mean time, petty chieftains began to come in, offering their submissions to the invader.

Before, however, five days had passed, a storm and high tide had dispersed the cavalry transports, now on their way towards the British coast ; and as the wind was accompanied with a spring tide, it raised such a surge as disabled or destroyed nearly every vessel of the fleet from which Cæsar and his infantry had landed. The Romans, though excellent soldiers, were very awkward and ignorant in naval affairs ; and being unaccustomed to see any considerable effects produced by the tides in the narrow seas which wash the Italian shores, they had dragged their small and, probably, ill-built vessels up the beach beyond the waves of one day's tide, without anticipating that the next might be driven in much higher ; so that the beating of a heavy surge from a rough sea dashed great part of their ill-secured fleet to pieces.

The Romans were now left unprovisioned, without the means of sending to Gaul for supplies, or additional troops, and unable to recross the sea. Their desperate situation was not unobserved by the Britons, who immediately conceived the hope of destroying the whole army of their invaders by famine, if they could not subdue them by arms. The wants of the Romans compelled Cæsar, who soon guessed the intentions of the British chiefs, to send out his soldiers in large foraging parties ; and he quickly collected within his camp nearly all the corn that was at this season ripening within an accessible distance. The little that remained was no-

ticed by the Britons as likely to be next visited: They had sedulously employed the interim in collecting forces; and now they concealed themselves in a wood near this yet standing corn, till, as they had anticipated, a considerable portion of Cæsar's little army came to the spot, and, laying down their arms, were soon scattered over the field, and busied in reaping the corn. At this moment the Britons rushed out from every point of the wood, slew several of the Romans before they could resume their arms, and with their horses and cars drove the rest before them, unable to gain time for forming into order.

The cars just noticed were, probably, low carts with solid wheels, whose motion is attended with a horrible, creaking, grating noise, as the axle turns with the wheels. Cæsar mentions this noise as one of the most alarming circumstances attending their approach. They carried two persons—one to combat, the other to drive. These coarsely constructed vehicles might be driven, without injury, over very rough ground; and the hardy native horses which drew them being incapable of moving with any great rapidity, the active warrior could run along the shaft to make his blow; or leave the car and rejoin it again, if a momentary retreat became necessary.

In the present instance, the confusion, from which the Romans were unable to recover, gave every advantage to this irregular kind of attack; and the whole of the foraging party would have been destroyed, had not the unusual cloud of dust, which these cars must have mainly contributed to raise, been perceived at the out-posts of the Roman camp, and induced Cæsar to hasten immediately, with such troops as happened to be under arms, in the direction which he knew the foragers had taken. The relief he brought proved most opportune; but he could do no more than keep the pursuers at bay, and cover the retreat of his own forces to their

camp; from which he found the British hostages had taken advantage of the alarm to escape.

A few days after this the arrival, in Cæsar's quarters, of about 300 auxiliary horse from the Continent, and a regular pitched battle, in which the Roman discipline naturally carried the day, brought the Britons to sue again for peace; which Cæsar, perceiving his present means inadequate to subduing the country, and having now collected or repaired sufficient shipping to re-convey his troops, was glad to concede, without demanding any severer condition than that of having twice as many hostages, as he had at first stipulated for, sent after him into Gaul; for which he hastened to re-embark with his troops before the equinox.

Had there been the least sincerity in Cæsar's profession, that he wished to keep the Britons peaceable, he had done enough to make them careful not to excite his anger by any interference between him and the Gauls, whom he was, avowedly, employed in reducing to thorough subjection. But no sooner had he re-landed in Gaul than he began to take measures preparatory to the formation of another expedition on a much greater scale. With this view he gave orders for building, in the course of the winter, a large number of vessels, on a model which his late experience had taught him was best adapted for the purpose of conveying and landing an army on the British coast. From the account which he gives of his directions on this head, it would appear that he wished them to have the qualities since aimed at in the construction of the flat-bottomed boats which have, in modern times, been prepared for a similar purpose. It has been customary for writers to give the name of ships to the vessels in ordinary use in every age; but the fleet of 800 ships with which Cæsar is said to have crossed the channel again, early in the following sum-

mer *, were no more than so many row-boats : and if, as appears rather probable, the whole army was conveyed in 600 of the largest vessels, even these carried, on an average, somewhat below forty men and five horses. As the army, however, must have consisted of about 20,000 foot, and 3,000 cavalry, it was considerable enough to effect any purpose which superior force could effect, in a country where natural difficulties were more likely than any resistance which the natives could exert to impede effectually such an invader's progress.

The appearance of Cæsar's numerous flotilla, as it stretched across the channel, threw the Britons into such consternation as made them shrink from any attempt to oppose his re-landing on the spot which had witnessed their courageous struggle against his first invasion. Before day-break the next morning he had advanced near twelve miles, and found the Britons collected on a rising ground to oppose his passing a river, probably the Stour. Being defeated here, after little more than a skirmish, they retired to a fastness in the woods, which had been fortified with a stockade. But that was soon carried. The following day the Roman army was already proceeding in search of the retreating Britons, as if pursuit was to be their only toil, and had just caught sight of their rear, when some horsemen, who had been sent in haste from the coast, rode up to Cæsar, and informed him, that a storm had driven his vessels from their anchorage, and that the greater part of them were already wrecked upon the shore. On hearing this, he marched immediately back to the sea-side ; and as the only thorough security against the recurrence of similar disasters and still farther losses, he employed his army for ten days in dragging every vessel which was not irrecoverably in-

* Before Christ, 54.

jured high up the beach, and there surrounding them with ramparts of earth, within which he left about 4000 men to form a garrison and employ themselves in repairing his shattered fleet.

In the mean while, the terror which so formidable an armament had struck into the Britons as they watched its approach, and the total failure of their first efforts to resist the Roman arms, induced them to forget all previous and ordinary causes of suspicion or fear, and to place themselves under the guidance of Cassibelan, king of the Cassii*, an ambitious chieftain, whose skill and courage had become known in their domestic feuds. The delay occasioned by Cæsar's anxiety to secure his fleet gave Cassibelan time to assume the command offered him by his countrymen, and to collect the warriors of his own and other neighbouring tribes, from Kent to Hampshire. A defeat which Cassibelan experienced, as soon as the Romans again set forward to penetrate the country, deprived him of many of these auxiliaries: but it was beneficial to the cause of the Britons, by teaching them to restrain their useless impetuosity, and leading them to the adoption of that harassing species of warfare by which alone a brave, but undisciplined, people can succeed against veteran troops; prowling perpetually about them; seldom seen, unless defending a naturally strong position, or bursting from the concealment of an ambuscade; but ever on the watch to cut off stragglers, or intercept supplies.

The farther Cæsar advanced the more his difficulties were increased by this kind of opposition, which left him the command of no more ground than his army covered. The cattle were driven off from his line of march, so that no food could be

* A British tribe inhabiting parts of Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Hertfordshire; in which latter county traces of their existence are still preserved, in the names of the hamlet of Cashibury and hundred of Cashio.

procured but by sending out parties of horse to a distance from the main body in search of booty; and these marauding parties were so carefully watched and boldly attacked, at every favourable opportunity, by the Britons, that Cæsar, afraid of having his cavalry farther weakened, was obliged to relinquish this method of provisioning his army. Amidst these difficulties, however, he proceeded to the banks of the Thames, which even then bore its present name, and crossed it, in the face of the Britons, at a ford in Berkshire. Yet hunger must soon have compelled his army to endeavour to regain the coast; and the pride of Cassibelan appeared about to be gratified by the flight, possibly by the destruction, of the vaunted Roman general. But the chieftain whose prowess and policy had attracted the admiration of the Britons, was not likely to be a good man. When it seemed improbable that any human arm should punish his injustice, Cassibelan had murdered the king of the Trinobantes*, and usurped the rights of his son, who had escaped the like violence by flight. This son was now in Cæsar's camp; and the Trinobantes, as the price of his promised restoration, brought in supplies, for the Roman army, of as much corn as Cæsar chose to require; and to avenge themselves on their oppressors, they informed the Romans that Cassibelan's chief town was not far off, and that numerous herds of cattle had been collected within its rudely fortified enclosure. Thither Cæsar desired to be conducted; forced his way through the woods and morasses, which were its best defence; stormed the town; seized the cattle; and destroyed great numbers of its inhabitants. This heavy loss, and the failure of an attempt made by the Kentish Britons to storm the fortifications which protected Cæsar's shipping, frightened some chieftains into the deser-

* A people inhabiting Essex and Middlesex.

don of the common cause, and made Cassibelan willing to come to terms with Cæsar on the spot; by which means the Roman general secured an unmolested return to the shore, from whence he immediately re-embarked his troops to revisit Britain no more.

Cæsar says, that he arranged the terms of an annual tribute, which our island was thenceforward to pay to Rome; but, as the king of Hertfordshire, though his dominions extended over parts of Bedford and Buckingham, and his name was known and respected in Kent and Sussex, and dreaded in Essex, could have no means of obliging the independent natives of the rest of the kingdom to submit to any disagreeable stipulations which he might make for them; and as neither Cæsar, nor any other Roman writer, have left any record of the nature or the receipt of this tribute, it may reasonably be concluded that, whatever Cassibelan promised, he never intended, and Cæsar never expected, the Roman republic to reap even this fruit from the destruction of human lives and human happiness which this gigantic robber had wantonly occasioned by his invasion. But though Cæsar knew not God nor His holy law, the decree had gone forth;—*Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed:* and it was to be executed in the sight of the world on this wilful man-slayer. When he had reached the summit of his hopes, and had said to his soul, *Thou hast wealth, and honour, and power, laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;* then was it said in heaven, *This day shall thy soul be required of thee.* Men as careless as himself about the misery his ambition might have produced among people whom they despised, could not bear his usurped authority over themselves: they rose, and assassinated him in the face of day. Surrounded by nobles once his equals, but now compelled to appear sup-

pliants for his favour, he had seated himself, in his pride, near the statue of another ambitious general, formerly his colleague, and the husband of his daughter, but whom he had driven to exile and to death; at the foot of that murdered friend's image Cæsar's expiring body fell.

Upwards of ninety years passed before the Romans again attacked the shores of Britain.

In the interval came to pass the most important and wonderful event this earth has ever witnessed. Jesus Christ; *He who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, had, by an inconceivable condescension, *divested himself of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*. The universal cessation from war, which accompanied his birth, was a fit announcement of *The Prince of Peace*. But when the rulers of the Jewish nation proceeded from refusing and insulting to crucify the *Son of the most high God*, though the earth, by its shaking, and the sun hiding his face, seemed to express the horror of nature at this last most awful and mysterious offence committed against Him by whom the worlds were made, the passions and vices of fallen man appeared to break forth with augmented and more audacious violence; as if wickedness could have no more to fear from Him whom it had seen submitting to be reviled, scourged, and suffering the death of a slave and malefactor. And yet that crucified Saviour is the same Lord Jesus who *shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not His Gospel*. But as, then, the enmity of Satan and the wicked obstinacy and hardened cruelty of man did but bring about the very purpose for which Christ came into the world—that by His one oblation of Himself once offered He might make a full, perfect, and

sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world ; so, in all inferior instances, the wicked are still made to work out the purposes of God ; who could say of Pharaoh, *Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee.* Thus were strife and ambition rendered instrumental in bringing hither the Roman arms, to complete the conquest which God would have them make ; and an emperor, half an ideot, effected, in GOD's chosen time, what had foiled the valour and sagacity of Julius Cæsar.

A British chieftain, whom domestic feuds had A. D. driven from his native country, travelled to ^{43.} Rome to seek revenge ; and succeeded in alluring the Romans to invade again his native country. Aulus Plautius, an experienced general, was selected by Claudius, the reigning Roman emperor, to conduct an army into Britain ; and, assisted and guided by the traitor who had solicited this invasion, he proceeded on his expedition, with more knowledge of the country, and of the hostile feelings which divided its inhabitants, than Cæsar had possessed. Hence he soon obtained a victory over Caractacus, the successor of Cassibelan, and formed alliances with other petty sovereigns, his rivals or enemies.

For a short time Claudius joined his forces in person ; and Vespasian, and his son Titus, who were employed in reducing Sussex and Hampshire, made themselves so conspicuous as brave and prudent officers, that the character they here gained gradually opened the way to the father's being chosen emperor of Rome, and to their becoming fit instruments for the purposes of God's just wrath. When the appointed time was come that the Son of man should manifest his power by the fulfilment of his dreadful sentence against Jerusalem, these were the persons under whose command the Roman eagles were gathered together against Judæa ; *by the edge*

of their unrelenting sword her self-blinded children fell, or were led away captive into all nations; Jerusalem was trodden down under their Gentile feet; and the abomination of desolation waved over the ruins of the Holy of holies.

The Romans, however, made but slow advances towards the conquest of Britain; from the difficulty of securing the continued submission of a people whom it was easy to defeat, whenever they could be met with, but who, retiring into the woods or morasses to the right and left on the approach of an army, could emerge again, and occupy their former pastures or hunting grounds in its rear, if it pushed forward; and who would make any promises of future obedience which a Roman commander, at the head of a large force, might insist on, if concession was likely to lead to his marching off his troops to some other district; but would keep no more of their promises than they chose, on his departure; because they possessed very little of that fixed property, the dread of forfeiting which is almost the only tie that can bind those people to their agreements, over whom religion exerts no salutary influence.

At the end of seven years, when Plantius had
 A. D. 51. resigned his command, and returned home to receive the honours decreed to him for his services in Britain, we find his successor, Ostorius Scapula, employed in fortifying military positions along the banks of the Warwickshire Avon, and the Severn; that the submission of the large and fertile district, within those rivers, might not be disturbed by the inroads of the independent tribes to the north and west of them. But after quelling a revolt of the Iceni *, and planting a colony of Roman veterans at Maldon, he pushed his conquests beyond these limits; and, at Caer-Caradoc, in Shropshire, defeated

* Inhabitants of Norfolk, Suffolk, and part of Cambridgeshire.

Caractacus at the head of the Silures. This determined opponent of the Roman arms sought next to induce the Brigantes to revenge the loss of his country, and the destruction of his friends: but their queen, Cartismandua, treacherously delivered him up, in chains, to Ostorius. The military pride of the Romans had always found a disgraceful indulgence, after any important success, in making an unfeeling display of the misery of their captives, whom they used to lead in triumph, amidst the spoils of their country, through the streets of Rome; and the insulting scene was ordinarily closed by the murder of the dethroned sovereign of the conquered nation; or by that of the bravest general, amongst those whose duty it had been to defend their native land against the aggressions of the Roman people. Caractacus, though but the petty chieftain of a barbarous tribe, had gained such a reputation by the persevering courage with which, for nine years, undaunted by repeated defeats, he had placed himself foremost in every effort made by the Britons to maintain their desperate struggle against the disproportioned power of the mightiest nation on the face of the earth, that he was sent by Ostorius to Rome; as an enemy, the possession of whose person, however obtained, was considered a sufficient victory to entitle the emperor to gratify himself with the parade of receiving his prisoner in public. When Caractacus passed through the streets of Rome, he expressed his surprise that the masters of those lofty palaces, which he there saw, should have thought it worth their while to fight about the wretched huts of the Britons. As an ambitious man, who did not forget that he too had been a king, he must have envied the sovereign who could command the implicit obedience of such wealthy subjects as the possessors of those sumptuous abodes, and of such brave soldiers as had driven him from his home; and, when ushered into the presence of Claudius, he

could not but have been forcibly impressed, though he exhibited no unseemly fears, at sight of the arrangements which added unusual dignity to the imperial court.

The contrast was, apparently, that between the extreme of wretchedness, and the height of human felicity. The emperor, seated on a lofty throne, saw a favourite wife raised to the same unwonted elevation; around him were the nobles of the celebrated Roman senate, in obsequious attendance; whilst the disciplined number and military pomp of the prætorian guards, formed a still more magnificent accompaniment in the eye of his martial prisoner. On the other hand, that prisoner, Caractacus, deprived of all that had once flattered his pride, galled by his fetters, and stung by the insulting gaze of the populace, saw the ensigns of his former rank eyed as a barbarian's rude imitation of royal state; heard the bitter lamentations of his family, of his wife, whom his arm could no longer protect; and beheld them crouching before his haughty enemies for mercy.

But if worldly greatness has very seldom much connection with real happiness, least of all can the pomp and power of a despotic sovereign secure it. Of Caractacus' subsequent fortune, all that we know is, that, by what, to the disgrace of the Roman character, is spoken of as remarkable clemency, his life was spared, and his family restored to liberty; and their late fears, probably, made them find happiness in their reprieve from their expected sufferings. But the magnificence which surrounded Claudius scarcely concealed the contempt with which his subjects viewed the feeble intellects of him, whom the capricious choice of the army had made their emperor; and the unhappiness of his domestic life was betrayed by crimes which shocked even that degraded people. The wife whose ambition his fondness 'ulged with unprecedented honours, soon

after poisoning him, that she might the easier rob his son of the inheritance of the vast Roman empire, and seat on its blood-stained throne her own son, the infamous Nero. And that monster, after getting rid, by similar means, of the unhappy youth whose rights he had usurped, murdered the wicked mother, whose guilt had purchased for her son the power which he thus dreadfully turned against her.

The Romans had now got rid of their most active opponent in Britain; and for some time after they were principally employed in securing, and improving the value of the country they had already conquered. Verulam*, like Maldon, became a Roman colony; that is, a number of veteran soldiers were placed there, and allowed to take possession of as much land as they chose; whilst the town was governed on the model of the cities in their native country, and possessed the same privileges. At this time also London is first spoken of in history, as a town inferior in rank and privileges to the A. D. 61. two above mentioned, but already a great place of resort for traders.

In the mean while the druids, whose authority over their countrymen must have been exceedingly thwarted, if not quite set aside, where the Roman power and laws prevailed, had concentrated all their old superstitions in the Isle of Anglesea. There the altars still reeked with the blood of human victims; probably now slain in greater numbers, to propitiate their false gods, from the notion that their anger occasioned the continued losses of the Britons. But the same holy and just God, who declared, that even the stranger who offered the cruel sacrifices of Moloch should die, brought upon these ministers of equally barbarous rites the sword of a fierce enemy, made implacable by the sight of their disgusting superstitions. When Suetonius Paullinus

* Now called St. Alban's.

landed his forces in Anglessea, they saw intermingled amongst the troops drawn up to oppose them, women in a funereal dress, running about with dishevelled hair, and hurling torches, like so many demoniacs; whilst the druids, standing around, with arms outstretched towards heaven, poured out the bitterest imprecations against the invaders. For a moment the arms of the Romans seemed paralyzed with a superstitious horror; but the next, ashamed of having shrunk before women and priests, they rushed on these deluded wretches, put them to the rout, burned the druids, by a cruel revenge, in their own sacrificial fires, and, finally, levelled their consecrated groves with the ground.

From being the instruments employed to inflict a just punishment on the wickedness of the Britons, Paulinus and his army were suddenly called away to witness and share the calamities which the vices of the Romans had brought upon themselves. Prasutagus, king of the Iceni, having no son to inherit his authority, named the emperor joint heir with his daughters; it having been suggested to him, probably by some Roman, that, by such a step, he would obtain for them that powerful protection which their weaker sex rendered peculiarly desirable. But, instead of his bequest being accepted as an honourable testimony of his respect, and rewarded by a liberal, or even a just attention to the rights which he had reserved for his family, the collector of the emperor's revenues seized on the whole succession. And when his widow, Boadicea, remonstrated against this injustice, she was scourged, without any regard to her sex or quality. The daughters suffered still more brutal usage; the other relations of the late king were seized and kept as slaves; and the whole nation, who had acted the part, and been allowed the title, of faithful allies of the Romans, were exposed to systematic pillage. Such an odious violation of the plainest dictates of common justice, was

sufficient to rouse all the vindictive passions of the most inert savage, and to stimulate the cowardly to the most desperate exertions, as affording the only hope of escaping the insults and the oppression which they saw that neither submission nor fidelity could avert. But besides these general inducements for hatred of, and resistance to, the Roman yoke, the whole system of ancient warfare was one of unchecked aggression on private rights, and indulgence in cruelty; so that every individual of the conquered people had his personal wrongs to revenge. Hence no sooner did Boadicea, escaping from her oppressors, raise the standard of revolt, than the whole British population in the neighbouring districts of the Roman portion of the island, seems to have risen as with one heart in her cause. Scattered divisions of the Roman army were surrounded and murdered. Maldon, Verulam, and London were reduced to ashes; as already Roman rather than British towns. The fury of savages was displayed upon every person of Roman blood, and every supposed friend of the Roman cause, who fell into their hands, without distinction of age or sex; till the heavier debt of cruelty and wickedness was transferred from the Roman to the British army. The force which Suetonius Paulinus could collect was reduced to 10,000 men, whilst the followers of Boadicea had swelled to an amount, which the Roman historians have exaggerated much beyond what can reasonably be believed, but which was sufficient to oblige him to avoid fighting till he had taken a position where he could only be attacked in front. And now the late horrid cruelties, perpetrated by Boadicea's party on their prisoners, ensured her defeat; having had the effect of convincing every Roman soldier, or ally, that death in the field would be infinitely preferable to surrender. Paulinus' troops were thus compelled to conquer; and their victory, in its turn, was followed by a pitiless slaughter of the

A. D.
61.

flying Britons, and of their wives and their children, who filled numerous cars in the rear of their army.

Boadicea, in despair, put an end to her own life; and thus deprived her countrymen of a rallying point; whilst Paullinus, as he gradually regained the territory from which the Romans had been driven, or withdrawn, behaved to the unhappy natives with a vindictive severity, which even his ferocious master, Nero, disapproved; as impolitic towards a people whose desperation had lately been found so troublesome. He was, therefore, recalled; and his
 A. D. 62. three next successors seem to have been selected as persons whose milder administration might induce the natives, already within the Roman pale, to submit to the yoke with less reluctance.

Whilst these Roman governors were exercising their short-lived power, a far mightier conqueror than they is supposed to have visited Britain, even Paul, the Apostle; *the weapons of whose warfare, indeed, were not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought, to the obedience of Christ**. Perhaps some haughty Roman officer, in power here, might cast his eyes on *such an one as Paul the aged* was, and seeing nothing but humble poverty in his appearance, and *caring for none of those things* of which he came to tell, would deem it impossible that his own importance could ever be insulted, by being brought to a comparison with that of one who had wandered thus far to urge what sounded to him as no more than *a question of names and words, and of the Jewish law*. Yet we have learned to consider all which these proud Romans made their boast, as only given them, that they might be employed as instruments in preparing the world to submit to the

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

humble apostles and messengers of Christ. A shapeless wall forms the most important part of what now remains of all that the power of Roman governors, or Roman emperors, ever did in Britain; whilst whoever is pre-eminent in sound wisdom hangs in deep and reverential attention on every word which it was given to that despised Jewish wanderer to leave for the instruction of the world; *if there be any virtue, if there be any praise* amongst us, it is to be found in the imitation of what *was learned and received, and heard and seen in him*. The souls he has won to Christ in this our island, by his *labour, whether present or absent*, will form a glorious portion of his *crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord*, when *heaven and earth are passed away*. And even then, amidst *infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses*, if these had made him *base in outward appearance*, to the eye of human pride, was he not the same Paul who had received such transcendant honour from God, that the mercy which had thus graciously indulged him, declared it necessary that he should suffer a peculiar infliction, *lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance* of his communications with Him, before whom kings and emperors are but polluted dust? That glory which the world aspires after, he called *foolishness*, and desired it not; and therefore it is that the learned have been put to considerable difficulty to detect the steps by which his journey to Britain may be traced. For the writer of the Acts of the Apostles told but little of the much that was done; because he only designed to record enough to teach the Church how extraordinary were the powers communicated by the Holy Ghost, after Christ's ascension, and to justify and proclaim the call of the Gentiles; not to gain for himself and his blessed companions, honour from men, by full details of the address, the industry, the patience, the zeal, the love with which they laboured; or the *signs, the wonders*,

and the mighty deeds they wrought, as ambassadors for Christ, that his abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.

It seems not improbable, that after St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, no less than nine years were spent by him in the zealous fulfilment of the high office of *Apostle of the Gentiles*; which had been peculiarly assigned to him, whom it had pleased God to design from his birth*, and, in due time, to call by his grace, that he might preach Christ among the heathen. In this actively-employed interval, all that we can learn of his proceedings from Scripture is, that he did not return to the East, to visit those churches which he had before planted there. For to them he had said, previous to his imprisonment, speaking as one who foresaw, by inspiration, what he asserted, *I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more†*. This should reasonably incline us, amongst the conflicting opinions of writers, who lived when very accurate information was difficult to procure, to believe those who assert that St. Paul then visited Spain, Gaul and Britain. Our assent to this assertion is farther justified by its being known, that during the *two years* in which Paul dwelt in his own hired house at Rome, and received all that came in unto him, there were two eminent females there, who were very likely to have besought him to have pity on the darkness of the miserable Britons. The name of the one was Pomponia Græcina; of the other Claudia. Pomponia was the wife of that Plautius under whose command the Romans first obtained a permanent footing in Britain; and that she was one of St. Paul's converts may be reasonably inferred, from her narrowly escaping martyrdom, within about a year after his arrival in

* Gal. i. 15.

† Acts xx. 25.

Rome, when she was tried for her life before her husband and relations, on the charge of having ^{A. D. 58.} adopted a foreign faith. Such improper power did the Roman laws entrust to this domestic tribunal! The result was, that she was pronounced innocent of any thing immoral; and that, living to a good age, her dress and air were remarked as being of an uniformly mournful, melancholy cast. This is the statement of Tacitus, the Roman historian; an unenlightened heathen, whose understanding, wonderfully subtle as it was in the detection of the secret springs of wickedness in the human heart, could not enable him to comprehend, that whilst the vices of his countrymen roused his bitter indignation, and excited his angry passions, she was moved, by love for their souls, to grieve with exceeding sorrow over that guilt, which must have been far more hideous in her sight than in his. *Dwelling among an idolatrous and dissolute people, this righteous woman, in seeing and hearing, must have witnessed enough to vex her righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.* The boasted cause of her husband's honours, the invasion of Britain, must have been contemplated by her as an unprovoked attack of the strong upon the weak; and she would justly fear that the blood of every defender of his native country, slain by her husband's arms, cried to Heaven for vengeance. These reflections would make her feel it to be peculiarly her duty to endeavour to procure for the land which he had afflicted, a blessing which would much more than compensate it for all it had suffered from his unprincipled ambition; that so she *might be comforted together with them, by the mutual faith both of them and her.*

But whilst the influence of Pomponia's wishes, in persuading Paul to carry the knowledge of the Gospel into Britain, can only be deduced from probable grounds, we have the Apostle's own authority for

the interest which Claudia, with Pudens *, took in the church of Christ. And that Claudia, the wife of Pudens, though married at Rome, was a native of Britain, is a fact with which we become acquainted from the mention of her marriage by a complimentary Roman poet. If, then, the rich man in his torments is represented as anxious to have his brethren so told of their danger, that they might escape from the like condemnation,—would not zeal for GOD's glory, and the dread of his wrath against idolatry, unite with natural affection, in making Claudia say with still more earnestness to St. Paul, *I pray thee, father, that thou wouldest visit my father's house, and my kindred? For how can I endure to see the evil that shall otherwise come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?*

We know, too, that in requesting St. Paul to visit a country so remote from the principal scene of apostolic teaching, as Britain, the petitioners would be heard with a willing ear. For, independent of the motives supplied by that fervent zeal which led him, *though free, to make himself a servant unto all, that he might gain the more souls to Christ*, fit was peculiarly his object † *to preach the Gospel where Christ was not yet named*; that he might not *build upon another man's foundation*, nor be tempted to *boast in another man's line of things made ready to his hand*. The words of the prophet were also ever in his mind, ‡ *As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things*. And if ever the benevolent purpose of a Christian missionary's visit, and the happy tidings of which he is the bearer, are duly appreciated, it might be expected that a people, situated as the Britons were, would so appreciate

* 2 Tim. iv. 21.

† Rom. xv. 20. 2 Cor. x. 16.

‡ Rom. x. 15. Is. lii. 7.

them. Their country had been desolated by war, in its most cruel form; their wild liberty was lost; and the vanquished had been driven to confess, in all the bitterness of despair, the overwhelming power of their oppressors. What joy it must have been to hear, amidst this hopeless misery, of peace given as the world gives it not; of joy, which no man shall take away; of a GOD, not frowning on their deficient sacrifices, but offering to *wipe away tears from off all faces*; and holding out to every one who turns with the whole heart to him, the certain hope of a life, after death, in happiness which shall know neither end nor abatement! Neither was St. Paul an eloquent and zealous teacher only. He was endowed with power to prove, by miracles, more convincing to the rude barbarian than any *enticing words of man's wisdom*, that the message which he delivered came from God; this message, too, he was enabled to utter and explain in their own language; and, where he found a humble and teachable mind, he could call down upon the happy convert those extraordinary and visible gifts of the Holy Spirit, which made him *a new creature* indeed. The simple Briton, on whom these gifts were bestowed, received power to comprehend and hold firm, such sublime truths as the wisest of the heathen philosophers had sought after, but found them not; and mysteries, which even inspired prophets had seen but darkly, were cleared up by the day-spring which descended on him from above.

To the Christian converts in Rome we find St. Paul writing, * that he longed to see them, in order that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end they might be established in the faith; now if some extraordinary spiritual gift was needful to establish a church amongst the civilized inhabitants of Rome, the like aid could be imparted by the

* Rom. i. 11.

Apostle to an extent sufficient for producing the same effect amongst the Britons. And, as St. Paul has himself remarked that God *hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*, it is no unreasonable conjecture that when St. Paul, by his preaching in this island, subdued both the Roman soldier and the enslaved Briton to the obedience of Christ, he would sometimes withhold from the former those exalted powers, which might prove a dangerous temptation to his natural pride, and bestow them as the gifts of an all-sufficient *Comforter* on the latter; enabling him, by the gift of languages, to become not only the enlightened pastor of his countrymen, but the respected instructor of his late enemies. Thus would the wolf and the lamb be brought, indeed, to feed together. How happy a change would this effect in their mutual feelings!

When St. Paul landed, the most populous and important town in Britain was Verulam; and, perhaps, some spot near St. Alban's may have heard the zealous Apostle's voice, and may have been pressed by the knees of the chosen few who listened to his call; while he besought them to *walk worthy of their vocation, with all lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another in love, and to be kind one to another, forgiving one another, even as they heard that God for Christ's sake had forgiven them.*

The historian feels tempted to lament that he can only speak of such interesting circumstances as exceedingly probable; but it was wisely ordained that our ancient chroniclers should not possess sufficient information to fix with certainty and precision the scenes blessed by the Apostle's presence; or the spot from whence the mingled voices of the despised Briton and his humbled conqueror first ascended to Heaven, confessing *one Lord and one faith*, and uniting in the praise of *one God and Father of all*. For otherwise superstition, the tendency of which is

ever to love the worship of the creature rather than that of the Creator, and which, in after times, did attack itself to a doubtful legend and a less important name *, would have made it difficult to root out the exaggerated veneration of some senseless clods of earth; if it could have been said, on this stone Paul stood, here the first British convert fell on his knees and wept his sins. Such temptations to giving again to stocks and stones much of the honour due to God alone, have been very instrumental in destroying the purity of the faith, and preventing its reformation in countries where the steps of our Lord and of His chosen Apostles may confessedly be traced. And happy is it for England that her inhabitants have been exempted from what would have given the greatest plausibility to a similar temptation; by St. Paul's choosing not to leave any clearer evidence behind him of his progress over her highly-favoured soil.

Many days were yet to pass, before the *bread, thus cast upon the waters*, is to be found again by the eye which can only perceive their troubled surface. The calm of peace could not be diffused over the land till the conquests of the Romans had found some natural boundary; either seas or a chain of mountains. To this they were now gradually proceeding uninterrupted, though still bravely opposed, when the command of the Roman forces in Britain was entrusted to C. Julius Agricola; in whom prudence and activity combined to make him a fit instrument for completing the work.

His first conquests confined the yet independent tribes of the West to the mountainous parts of our island in that direction. In his next campaign he subdued Lancashire and Cumberland; and, entering Scotland, advanced as far as the river Tay without meeting with any hostile forces.

* Alban.

A.D. The fourth summer was employed in building a line of forts between the Frith of Forth and that of the Clyde; to make a barrier, where the line to be defended was the shortest that could be chosen, between the country which he intended to form into a Roman province and those less valuable districts to the North, which it was almost impossible to penetrate with a regular army, and which it would have been more burdensome than advantageous to retain as a permanent possession. Yet, in order that the fear of the Roman arms might deter the hardy mountaineers from attempting to encroach on the fertile plains, within the Roman line, for plunder,

he afterwards led his army a considerable distance beyond this line, till he was met by the Britons, under their chieftain Galgacus, at the foot of the Grampians. He there fought and conquered for the last time; being soon after recalled to Rome by the jealousy of the emperor,

A.D. 85. the infamous Domitian.

Agricola took more pains than any of his predecessors had done to reconcile the Britons to the yoke; by restraining the insolence and exactions of the Roman officers and tax-gatherers, and by encouraging the natives to imitate the arts, and aim at the comforts of civilized life. But when we are told, by his son-in-law, the historian Tacitus, that the face of the towns and the manners of the people were changed, by his influence, before the end of the second winter after his becoming governor, we know that he must be speaking the language of partiality and exaggeration. We can perceive, however, God's mercy in leading persons who had so much power in their hands to perceive that their authority would be the more firmly fixed, and that their days would pass the more easily and pleasantly, in proportion as they were seen to act with justice, and to protect the people, whom they had thoroughly subdued, from the injuries of others;

and could succeed in diffusing among them a taste for the satisfactions of a more tranquil life. It seems to have been for this purpose that He gave them their power; and, whilst they rested from their wars and violence, the favoured few who had learned to know God came forward, and poured the saving truths of the Gospel into the hearts of rapidly-increasing numbers, whom the love of peace and advances in intellectual cultivation were preparing to receive the spirit of peace and of wisdom. But the gradual progress of this most important work entirely escaped the notice of historians, who had only eyes for the exploits of ambition. It became apparent afterwards by its happy fruits; whilst they observed nothing which, in their estimation, deserved to be recorded till our island A.D.
121. was visited by the emperor Hadrian.

This martial and indefatigable prince inspected, in person, nearly all the provinces of his vast dominions. In his view the occupation or the abandonment of the marshes and forests which then covered the low-lands of Scotland was a question of very slight importance: so that he appears to have decided on relinquishing them to the Caledonians; for the purpose of placing his frontier garrisons on a line, considerably to the south of Agricola's forts, which happened to suit his purpose better. Along the whole length of this line, which extends above sixty miles from Burgh on the Solway frith to Newcastle, he cut a ditch eleven feet in breadth and nine in depth; and erected an earthen rampart, which at this day continues, in some places, six feet above the natural surface of the ground. The incursions of predatory parties of Caledonians, on horses, or in their cars, which might pass unimpeded through the intervals of a chain of forts, in the obscurity of night or of a fog, would be effectually checked by such a fortification as this: and a military road, running parallel to the rampart, facilitated the march of the

Roman troops from their different stations to any point threatened with attack.

This great military work was, however, far surpassed by the fortifications which the Emperor

^{A.D. 209.} Severus raised, along nearly the same line, about ninety years after; when the independent tribes of North Britain were found to have become more bold and powerful. The Roman soldiers were employed about two years in constructing Severus's wall. The rampart was of solid stone masonry, twelve feet high and about eight in thickness; it was flanked by a deep ditch, and accompanied by a military way, and strengthened with towers, castles, and stations, at convenient distances, in which it was intended that 10,000 men should be so disposed as to perform garrison duty along this line of defence.

The emperor, an austere old man, had brought his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, into Britain; and whilst he took up his own residence at York, he entrusted the care of the South to Geta, and gave Caracalla orders to march beyond the walls, and exterminate the inhabitants of Caledonia, without sparing even the infants at their mothers' breasts. In the mean time, he himself suffered more misery than his angry passions were permitted to bring upon the people who had provoked them. He was tormented by painful diseases; by fears for his youngest and favourite son; and by horror at the vices of the elder, who had, as he could not but suspect, formed more than one plot against his

^{A.D. 211.} life. Pain, or a broken heart, put a period to his existence, before Caracalla could commence his work of blood; and the two brothers hastily quitted the island to take possession of the luxuries and

^{A.D. 212.} magnificence of the Roman court. There Caracalla had Geta assassinated in his own presence, and in their common mother's arms; after which he is computed to have put to death 20,000 persons of both sexes as the friends of his murdered

brother, or as guilty of lamenting his miserable death. In a few years more the odious tyrant fell a victim to the fears of his own attendants, and perished in his turn by assassination. Such ^{A.D. 217.} were the crimes which stained the sovereigns of a people, amongst whom the moral duties and the demands of honour were examined as carefully, and understood almost as clearly as amongst ourselves. But *professing themselves to be wise* the haughty Romans continued *fools, worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator*. Hence the Holy Spirit was not besought to purify their hearts, and God gave them over to be *the servants of sin unto death*. Their emperors might become wonderful examples of the unfathomable depth of guilt into which the human heart will sink when surrounded by temptations, and unchecked by any fears; but they never could have perpetrated such horrible atrocities, had they not found too many of their subjects, *without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful*, not only doing such things as deserve death, but *having pleasure in them that do them* *.

CHAPTER III.

Britain under the Roman Emperors.

THE authority of the Romans was now regularly established over the largest and most valuable portion of Great Britain. The territory south of Severus' wall continued, for nearly four centuries, to be a province of the Roman empire. For so long a time this wall was the barrier between civilized and savage life, separating people whose habits and

* Rom. i. 32.

feelings were formed under entirely different circumstances. When both people were afterwards subdued, it was by different invaders; hence the distinction between the inhabitants to the north and south of the wall has been perpetuated, even to our days, under the later names of Scotch and English. Various political events, indeed, advanced the borders of England, some distance to the north of the eastern portion of the wall, so as to include Northumberland; but it was the influence of the long established boundary of the Roman province, which fixed the division of the two kingdoms to that part of our island.

The general administration of the Roman conquests in Britain was entrusted to the Prefect, or, as he was styled at a later period, the Vicar of Britain; and to the Procurator, or collector general of the imperial revenues.

The prefect had the command of the army, and possessed the power of deciding causes by his own notions of what was equitable; instead of being tied down to the strict letter of the law. The conscription was enforced under his authority. By it the Britons were obliged to deliver up a certain number of their sons to serve in the Roman wars. There is some ground for estimating the force kept up, by these compulsory recruits from Britain, at nearly 20,000 men. These conscripts were not allowed to remain in their native country; because, there, they might prove disposed to become the defenders of their fathers and kinsmen, against the oppression of their foreign masters. They were carried away, therefore, to distant lands, (in some cases, of which we have evidence, to Egypt and Armenia) to spend their lives in wars in which they had no natural interest. Their native country was, in like manner, kept in subjection by the victims which Roman ambition had collected from other
ions of their vast empire.

The same jealousy which refused to trust the British soldier with the protection of the land of his birth, led to a careful exclusion of the natives from every office of trust, or authority. All holders of such offices, were even prohibited from marrying a native, or purchasing any property in the soil.

The taxes collected by the procurator consisted of a duty, amounting to about the tythe on the produce of the land, whether arable, pasture, meadows, orchards, or mines; though a larger proportion than the tenth was frequently demanded; and the grower was required to convey it to the place where it was to be used or sold; of a legacy duty; of a duty on sales, whether by auction, or in the markets; of duties resembling our assessed taxes; of a per centage on the labour of artisans, and the profits of traders; and of a capitation tax.

This last was made so heavy under some merciless and prodigal emperors, that it laid the Roman provinces waste, like a pestilence; reducing freemen to sell themselves, to escape the punishments inflicted for non-payment; preventing marriage; and making the horrible crime of child murder a common practice, as the only means of avoiding demands, which the father of a family saw no prospect of being able to satisfy.

The amount of all the taxes raised in this wealthy country in 1813, one of the most expensive years of the late war, did not amount to quite five pounds per head, whereas the capitation tax alone, demanded from the province of Gaul, by the rapacious ministers of the emperor Constantius, was nearly fourteen pounds sterling per head. So enormous a sum could only have been collected by rating several of the poor together as one man, and compelling the rich to pay the sums necessary to make the amount correspond with the population of their district.

But though God had thus *delivered the strength*

of the Britons *into captivity, and their glory into the enemy's hand*, yet the calm which the Roman power maintained, with few interruptions, by its irresistible force, was favourable to the diffusion of religious knowledge. The people, too, were preserved from being blinded by unbroken and abundant worldly happiness; which so generally and so awfully closes the eyes of those who possess it; against the prospects and the hopes of a spiritual life. Neither does the Christian church, in Britain, appear to have been checked in its growth by those long continued persecutions, which Satan raised in other countries. They who might have been *offended*, had *tribulation or persecution arisen because of the word*, were not tried with the pains and terrors, which offer a deceitful hope of escaping from them by deserting Christ. They were visited, rather, with such afflictions, as naturally led them to place all their hopes of happiness in that world, where they knew there would be no distinction between Roman and barbarian.

The train of circumstances by which the fierce persecution, that raged in the other provinces of the Roman Empire, was almost entirely warded off from Britain, was such as no human contrivance could have brought about. The all-wise disposer of events could alone have arranged them so as to produce this result, among several others the purposes of which it is here unnecessary to examine. In the detail of these events, it will be seen, how the wickedness of sinners is made to serve God's designs.

Towards the close of the third century, the Saxons and Franks, (who then inhabited the north-western parts of Germany, and were afterwards respectively the conquerors of Britain and France,) had begun to harass the subjects of the Roman empire by piratical expeditions into the British Channel. In order to protect commerce from such

depredations, the Emperor had a fleet collected at Boulogne, and gave the command of it to an officer named Carausius. But this person, though he shewed himself to be a brave and enterprising officer, was observed systematically to defer his attacks upon the pirates till they had scoured the seas, and taken numerous prizes. The peaceable merchant was thus as much injured as before; though the greater part of the booty enriched Carausius, instead of being carried into the German ports. This iniquity would soon, however, have been terminated; but, whilst the emperor was taking measures to punish his perfidious sub-
A.D. 287.
 ject, Carausius seduced the fleet, sailed to Britain, assumed the title of emperor, and made an alliance with the Saxons and Franks; who admired bravery and ambition, and thought little of the guilt of perfidy and rebellion.

It is happy for the people whose country is seized by an usurper, that it becomes his obvious interest to acquire their good will by popular conduct, as he will be conscious that their natural prejudices would disincline them from supporting him in his usurpation. Carausius, henceforward, effectually protected Britain from the savage neighbours, who had previously disturbed its peace. For seven years he received, from the thankful natives of the Roman part of the island, the honours due to an emperor. But the more brilliant the success of a traitor, the more dazzling, and consequently the more tempting, do the wages of that sin appear, to those who surround him with servile respect. A favourite
A.D. 293.
 minister, Allectus, murdered Carausius at York, and declared himself emperor in his stead.

In the mean while the legal sovereign of the Roman empire, Diocletian, had given activity to his government by raising a distinguished general to share his throne and title; and, by bestowing on two others, Constantius Chlorus, and Galerius, the

purple robe; which was the proper distinction of those to whom the Roman people gave the name of Cæsar.

Constantius Chlorus undertook the task of recovering the province of Britain from its usurper. Allectus fell in the first battle; and, just as his disbanded troops were about to plunder London, the city was saved by the arrival of Constantius; who was, therefore, at once hailed by the inhabitants as their sovereign and deliverer. Our island became his permanent residence; and when Diocletian

A.D.
302.

was led, by superstitious terrors, to issue an imperial mandate, for pulling down all Christian places of worship, and declaring the Christians incapable of holding any civil employments or honours, Constantius assembled the Christian officers of his household, and read to them the decree, which required them to abjure their religion or resign their posts. The trial proved that some *chose rather to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, than to suffer affliction with the people of God*. But, to the utter confusion of those who professed their readiness to *deny the Lord who bought them*, Constantius dismissed them from his service; observing, that he could not trust to the fidelity of men, who had proved themselves faithless to their God.

A person who could think and act as Constantius Chlorus did, in this instance, was not likely to enforce the later and more cruel decrees of Diocletian;

A.D.
304.

by which the Christian bishops were condemned to prisons and tortures; and the officers of the empire were charged to compel their congregations to sacrifice to idols. Eusebius, indeed, says that Constantius became a Christian; and that the sanctity which prevailed within the precincts of his palace, made it resemble a church. It was from Constantius's son, that this historian received his information; but, as that son was his sovereign, Eusebius may, perhaps, be suspected of speaking

more highly of the father than he deserved. It is, however, incredible that he should have spoken of Constantius as he has done, had that prince been a persecutor of the British Christians. Yet the Romish legend respecting St. Alban, gives an account of his being beheaded during Constantius's government, for sheltering a Christian from the search of the Roman officers of justice, and adopting his faith. But the history of this supposed martyr was written 400 years after the event it pretends to relate. It makes his executioner become his convert as he was led to death, and the river run up hill to quench his thirst; and adds many other foolish stories, very unlike the instances of useful interference by miraculous power, recorded in the acts of the Apostles, as wrought to prevent their being prematurely removed from their important labours. That Constantius was not compelled to persecute the Christian Church in Britain, was owing to what had been done by Carausius and Allectus. For from their behaviour the Roman emperor had learned, that if they attempted to force a popular governor of Britain into measures disagreeable both to himself and his people, they would probably lose a province, which was daily becoming more valuable; and might be putting arms into the hands of a dangerous rival.

In the preparation thus made, by previous events, for bringing into Britain a governor of a mild and just character, and of great authority; and for making him, virtually, independent of the Court of Rome, when that court was issuing orders for the extermination of the Christian name, it is impossible not to recognise the protecting hand of Him, by whom kings reign and princes govern. Nor is it less evident that there was peculiar mercy in mitigating the fierceness of our forefathers' trials without entirely separating Britain from the Roman empire,

A.D. at a time when the legal establishment of
330. Christianity, throughout the whole of the Roman dominions, was soon to be brought about.

Constantius Chlorus died in peace at York ;
A.D. having been created joint emperor with Ga-
306. lerus, about a year before. On his death his celebrated son, Constantine, was hailed emperor by the troops assembled at the spot, and soon left Britain ; having received the sanction of Galerius to his ruling the northern provinces of the empire, with the title of Cæsar. But the manner in which the sovereignty of the Roman dominions was now parcelled out amongst several princes, nearly equal in power, though with some difference of title, could not be expected to prove a peaceable or durable arrangement, unless the several colleagues had been the most virtuous and just of men. Pretexts would readily occur, to any ambitious member of the imperial partnership, for quarrelling with a colleague, to obtain an increase of his own share ; and they were all ambitious men. Hence arose civil wars :

and, in the course of eighteen years time, the
A.D. sword and the executioner had swept away all
324. Constantine's colleagues and rivals.

Then it was, when his commands were obeyed without dispute, throughout the countries now called England, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, the isles of the Mediterranean, Greece, the states of Barbary, Egypt, Syria, and Turkey, that Constantine issued his edicts for casting the heathen gods out of their temples ; prohibiting idolatrous sacrifices ; and proclaiming, that the Roman empire was *become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, who shall reign for ever and ever.*

There are, however, many circumstances in the history of Constantine, which prove him to have been far from a good man ; though it had pleased God to make him His instrument in the great work.

of removing idolatry, and of putting the visible Church of Christ in possession of the most important of the kingdoms of the earth. We can perceive that he would, naturally, lend himself to be God's willing instrument in this. His rivals were fierce persecutors of the Christians; so that it was easy for him to see the policy of gaining the affection of what was become a numerous, and so far, a powerful body of their subjects; by announcing himself, first, as the generous protector of Christians, and latterly as their fellow-believer. Probably, indeed, Constantine having early cast away his heathen prejudices, was mentally convinced of the truth of Christianity, by the divines whom he encouraged to approach him. But unhappily those divines had begun to give too much attention to subtle questions. They taught their hearers to search the Scriptures in order to deduce ingenious arguments in favour of particular theories; rather than to read the word of God that it might *effectually work in them*, subduing their hearts to the obedience of Christ; and might bring them, by a deep sense of the weakness and corruption of the natural man, to covet earnestly, and seek with fervent prayers for the help of the Holy Spirit. Hence Constantine, though he became a Christian in name, and in his assent to the creed of the Church, seems never to have been taught to surrender his whole heart to God; and though he was allowed to become the founder of the first Christian kingdom, he was not blessed with the higher honour of becoming the reformer of the Church. It already needed reformation. *The latter times* *, foretold by St. Paul, had already begun; *some having so far departed from the faith delivered by the Apostles, as to give heed to doctrines concerning the spirits of dead saints; forbidding, also, to marry; and commanding to abstain from meats;*

* 1 Tim. iv.

which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving.

The bishops of Rome, too, were beginning, about this time, to be notorious for their ambition; the income, and the respectful attention which they received from the wealthy Christians of that great city, having made their office an object of desire for bad men; who frequently obtained it by intrigues, nay, sometimes, by absolute violence. As bishops of the great metropolis of the empire, their situation, when viewed politically, must have been regarded by their brethren as a peculiarly important one. But we find in the first recorded public transaction, in which the heads of the British Church appear concerned, a decisive proof that the bishops of much less celebrated cities, though they would, doubtless, have gladly looked up to those holding the conspicuous situation of Bishops of Rome, as *examples to the flock*, were quite unconscious that they could, in the face of the Apostle Peter's express prohibition*, put in any claim to *being Lords over God's heritage*.

The transaction here alluded to, was the assembling of a council of divines from the provinces then under Constantine's authority, at Arles in Gaul, to deliberate on certain points of discipline, concerning which the clergy were in much perplexity. Amongst those who thus met together, were the Bishops of York, of London, and of another British town, perhaps Caerleon. Having come to a decision, they drew up certain rules and sent a copy of them to Silvester, then Bishop of Rome. But, instead of claiming to have met by his authority, or requesting his sanction to their decrees, as if he was the infallible head of the Church, they speak of themselves as *collected together by the command of the emperor*; and call the Bishop of Rome merely their *brother*,

* 1 Pet. v. 3.

whose society and assistance they would gladly have had. Since, however, they understood that his occupations kept him at home, they tell him that they thought fit to *signify to him what they had decreed; as wishing all persons to know what they must, in future, observe.*

It has been remarked, that the elevation of the Roman Empire, was in various ways, conducive to the propagation of Christianity, and to the reception of the Gospel as a divine revelation. But the vices of a people who had been civilized, and risen to wealth and power under a system of idolatry, devised to encourage the indulgence of the passions, were a great obstacle to the formation of a virtuous population. The infamous dregs of luxurious heathen cities, and of vast disorderly camps, would but spread their contaminating pollution with the more rapidity amongst the servants of God; when, by their becoming nominally Christians, the boundary which had previously served to warn the believer, that he was entering the enemy's quarters, was rendered indistinct. Whilst Cain still lived, and bore about his awful mark, the sons of God would shudder to find themselves among his children; but, when that sign of the first murderer met their eyes no longer, the daughters of the wicked were fair in their sight; and they approached, and shared their sins and their destruction. To prevent the second people of his choice, the sons of Israel, from being corrupted by the like contagion, God issued his commands for exterminating the grossly polluted inhabitants of Canaan; as though nothing short of this could prevent the contamination of their horrid offences. And now, the same righteous Judge of nations, and watchful Guardian of his *peculiar people*, determined again to purge the land in which his Church abode; by destroying the arts, long degraded to serve as stimulants to wickedness; by scattering the wealth which supplied corrupting

luxuries; and by breaking up all the customs and habits of a people, whose manners, whose language, and whose abodes, were full of the infection of vice. The long state of suffering, from which the Church had but just emerged, could not fail, however, to have impressed its members with such a conviction of the hostility of the world to the doctrines of the Gospel, and to have formed them to such habits of abstinence from the pleasures of the world, as might, for some time, protect them from the mischievous influence of the great body of nominal Christians brought in amongst them by the decrees issuing from Constantine and his successors, which declared Christianity to be the religion of the state. A pause was, therefore, yet made, before God summoned the future conquerors of the empire to their appointed task. When He will effect any of His purposes, all things are found prepared for His ends.

In the interval of which we are now speaking, the hardy nations, whose ill cultivated territories extended along the north-western confines of the empire, grew too numerous to subsist on the scanty means which they had skill to raise by agriculture, or could collect by the chase; whilst the subjects of the empire, instead of the resolute spirit required to defend their envied possessions, had sunk into abject effeminaey; the result of exchanging the vices of violence for those of idle luxury.

This interval, and the work of destruction which should follow, had alike been announced long before, as forming part of God's avowed purposes. Bef. Chr. 600. To the prophet Daniel, it had been shewn, under two different types, that ten kingdoms * should be formed out of the discordant materials † which the Roman power had held together, whilst its energy remained unimpaired. To St.

* Dan vii. 7. 19, 20, 23, 24.

† Ib. ii. 41. 43.

John it had been allowed to see, signified by other signs, the sufferings of the Christians under the heathen emperors*; the short period of rest that should follow†, and the fierce and terrible invasions which should afterwards lay waste and tear in pieces the different portions of the empire, till it was broken up into ten kingdoms‡.

To both it was given to see, that with this period of wars and desolation, and conquests, *the mystery of iniquity*, the papal power, should grow up, extending its pernicious influence over these ten kingdoms§. And to St. John, it was said, with great particularity and perfect distinctness, that the abode of this *mother of abominations* should be in the city, *which sitteth on seven hills, that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth*||.

The interval between the times of persecution under the heathen emperors, and the dismemberment of the empire, was not, however, to be a period of undisturbed prosperity for the Church. St. John had not likened it to a season of joy, but to *great silence for the space of half an hour*¶; such as often precedes a storm, and is not without melancholy interruptions.

The claims of revelation were confessed; but, as men were no longer compelled, by the terrors of persecution, to fly to its promises, as their only source of comfort and support, cooling zeal, idle curiosity, or the desire of distinction, made many receive it in an irreverent or litigious spirit. They reasoned about the Gospel, as a document whose importance they acknowledged, instead of listening to it as the voice of Him who had died that they might live for ever. Hence arose numerous dis-

* Rev. vi. † Rev. viii. 1. ‡ Rev. viii., ix. xiii. xvii.

§ Dan. vii. 8. 20, 21. 24, 25. Rev. xvii. 3. 12. 16, 17.

|| Rev. xvii. *The city on seven hills*, was a name for Rome well known to its inhabitants.

¶ Rev. xviii. 1.

sensions and heresies. An affectionate son, as he reads a letter of advice left by his dying parent, dwells on every word, to love it; and to gratify his own feelings, by making his future conduct agree with his parent's revered directions, in their fullest demands. But if legal practitioners sit down to examine his father's will, though drawn up with much more accuracy of expression, it is impossible that the language should be so precise as to prevent difference of opinion with respect to the meaning of some of its clauses.

In this way was the Bible now sifted; and flaws were soon imagined in two articles, which are very mortifying to the pride of man; the doctrine, that he must consent to believe, at God's bidding, truths which his mind is incapable of levelling to its own standard; and the doctrine, that he is utterly unable to save himself, or even to correct his own faults.

The humble Christian reads that his divine Master called Himself *the Son of man*; and that *in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto his brethren* *. On the other hand, he also reads, that in Christ *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* †; and that, *by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible* ‡. And, as he is convinced that both parts of this statement must be true, he believes his Saviour to have been both God and man. Again he reads, *The Lord our God is ONE Lord* §; wherefore he believes that the Son and the Father are *one*, without inferiority, or any such distinction as to break the unity of their divine nature. Being told these things on the authority of Him, who only could *make known the mystery of the Gospel*, he no more scruples assenting to their truth, because, *without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness*, which speaks of

* Heb. ii. 17.

† Col. ii. 9.

‡ Col. i. 16.

§ Deut. vi. 49. Mark xii. 29.

God *manifest in the flesh*, than he hesitates about believing, that a stone, sent from his hand, will fall to the ground, because he finds himself utterly incapable of comprehending how the force of gravity can exert its invisible agency.

But, at this time, arose the celebrated Arius, A.D. 316. who reasoned about the divine nature much as a worm might argue about the nature of man; if it contemplated him, and could hear him describe his own faculties. It would very probably refuse to believe more than it could understand; when the description should be found to contain details which it could neither comprehend nor reconcile. Thus did Arius refuse to receive, with unqualified assent, the words of the Holy Spirit as delivered to us in the Gospel, that the Word was in the beginning; and was with God; and was God. In his creed such distinctions were made between the divine nature of the Father and the Son, as would have required us to believe them, contrary to so many plain declarations of Scripture, to be *two* Gods; instead of two persons and *one* God.

To examine the opinions of Arius, and check the progress of error, by a declaration of the faith of the Church, Constantine summoned divines from all the provinces of the empire, to meet at Nice, A.D. in Asia; where they drew up the greater part * 329. of the creed, thence called Nicene.

The Greeks now took the lead in all public affairs; and even the emperors began to be spoken of, henceforward, as Greek Emperors; in consequence of Constantine's removing the seat of government from Rome to his new capital, named after him Constantinople. But the Greeks were a race of vain and subtle disputants before they became Christians. The besetting sin of Arius is seen in

* As far as the word Holy Ghost.

too many of his opponents. He would not believe any thing which he could not fully understand ; and we find them defining with precision, and laying down delicate distinctions in questions of the most awful character, with a hardihood which seems to imply, that neither would they have believed, had they not persuaded themselves that they fully comprehended that nature, which is far above the grasp of the human intellect. Both parties too frequently speak as if they had entirely forgot that St. Paul, instructed by the Spirit, had said, that *without controversy* it was a *great mystery* * into which they were so rashly intruding. Both parties seemed to slight the valuable instruction which Moses has left for the edification of those, in every age, who are inclined to make religion consist in the knowledge of what God has chosen to leave in obscurity—*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law* †.

For a time, the sufferings of the Son of God seemed, again, *unto the Greeks foolishness* ; and the opinions of Arius gaining many followers among these vain reasoners, particularly in the imperial court, their influence was actively exerted in disseminating his errors, and devising various pretexts for oppressing those who adhered to the apostolic faith. But temptations arising from the pride of philosophy, were more seducing to the loquacious and argumentative Greeks, than to the unsophisticated inhabitants of Britain.

A temptation built on the repugnance which the pride of man feels to the confession of guilt, was more injurious to the British Church than that arising from the pride of science.

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

† Deut. xxxix. 29.

One Pelagius, a native of these islands, reflecting, with undue self-applause, on his own conquest over the grosser vices, persuaded himself that the Church had, till his time, been quite mistaken, in teaching that the influence of the Holy Spirit was necessary to cleanse the heart and purify the will. According to Pelagius, men are born in innocence, and it is in their own power to continue so. From whence it would naturally follow, that they who by their own self-command do thus continue, are fit for heaven; and stand in no need of looking for pardon to the effects of that blessed sacrifice of Himself made by Christ. Whereas the Scripture says, *He gave himself a ransom for all* *. But, indeed, the whole of these assertions are so entirely opposed to what is taught in Scripture, *precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little*, but every where in one consistent tone, that it is astonishing how such plain and numerous texts could, by any perversion of reasoning, be explained away. Every man, whose understanding is not wilfully or judicially confused, finds himself *constrained, thus to judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead* †. Since it is said, that *we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son*; what can the word *reconcile* imply, but that we once were *enemies*? In the same manner, seeing the Scripture calls *all goodness and righteousness, and truth, the fruit of the Spirit* ‡; and says, that *the sons of God are as many as are led by the Spirit of God* §; it should seem that a man must either deny the authority of Scripture, or receive its language in the plain meaning of the words quoted, and of the many similar passages, and confess that *every good gift is from above*. But men seem to feel it too humiliating to be obliged to come to the

A.D.
410.

* 1 Tim. ii. 6.

† Gal. v. 22, 23. Eph. v. 9.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 14.

§ Rom. viii. 14.

conclusion to which the Apostle's question leads ; when he asks, *What hast thou that thou didst not receive ? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it ?* To escape from this mortifying summons to the surrender of all right to boasting, mankind will always lend a favourably prejudiced ear to the most empty arguments, offered by *mouths* that will not be *stopped*, against the fact of *all the world* having become *guilty before God*.

Under this temptation many of the British Christians fell away from the faith, as it had been received, and was still acknowledged by the general church. Perhaps too, when they had heard what a considerable name their countryman, Pelagius, had made for himself in Italy, Africa, and Asia, by opposing the scriptural account of human corruption, the British Clergy felt something of a foolish vanity in sharing his celebrity ; which made them willing, for this cause also, to pay to his sophistry the respect due to sound reasoning.

The progress which the Pelagian heresy made in Britain, soon attracted the notice and pity of the neighbouring Christian nations. Two bishops, Germanus and Lupus, came over from Gaul with A. D. 429. the charitable purpose of confirming the wavering, and using their best endeavours to reclaim those who had been seduced. But the account of their pious labours, which has come down to us from Bede, was written long after their deaths ; and in an age when an evil custom had crept in, of endeavouring to excite undue veneration for the character of any person who had served the cause of religion, by connecting with his history numerous miracles, often exceeding those wrought by the Apostles, or their Lord. Hence, it is difficult to decide how much, of what we are told respecting these bishops, deserves to be credited. They appear, however, to have been respectfully received ;

and their kind advice seems to have had a salutary effect.

How ignorant of the true spirit of Christianity the historian of their labours was, may be gathered from his saying, that "by their own merits, and the intercession of the departed martyr St. Alban, they procured a tranquil voyage home." Germanus had twice left his home for a foreign land, solely to check the dangerous error of believing that man could claim aught from his Maker, on the ground of merit. It may be hoped that, as a *master of Israel*, he had not forgotten that there is but *one Mediator between God and man* *, *who ever liveth to make intercession for men* †. Could he, therefore, have anticipated, that such language, as has been quoted, would ever be used in speaking of his services, and of the mercies shewn to him, he would doubtless have grieved to think that God should thus be robbed of his honour; and would have poured from his heart the Psalmist's prayer, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.*

CHAPTER IV.

Britain deserted by the Romans, and invaded by the Saxons.

THE division of the empire was by this time begun.

The Roman authority had ceased in Britain about the year 409.

Whilst civil wars and foreign invasions were weakening the power of the imperial government in every quarter, the legions which garrisoned Britain had, latterly, chosen to give to one favourite officer after

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

† Heb. vii. 25.

another, the title of emperor. They were always willing to march into the richer provinces of the South of Europe, to support the claims of their candidate; and in these expeditions, the desire of adventures, and the hope of booty, naturally induced the bravest of the British youth to accompany them. By the repetition of such measures, the Roman province in Britain was drained both of its appointed, and its natural defenders; whilst the independent tribes in the northern part of the island had received an increase of strength, from the addition to their number of the hardy race of Scots. These people passed over from Ireland, their earlier abode; and fixed themselves in the territories of the antient Caledonians, or Picts; eventually giving to their new country the name of Scotland. From time to time, like ravenous beasts breaking in upon a herdsman's folds, these wild warriors crossed the now ill guarded wall; and carried off the corn and cattle, which they were at once too indolent and ignorant to raise in abundance at home; or those useful productions of the commonest arts of civilized life, which they had neither skill to make, nor means to purchase. If driven back, occasionally, with the loss of many lives, before the few disciplined troops remaining in South Britain, the warriors, with the spirit which actuates the gambler, were still ready, again, to stake their lives upon the hopes of plunder and escape. The uncertain fear of these sudden invasions from a restless foe, produced amongst the Britons a feeling of insecurity gradually destructive of all those numerous sources of wealth, comfort, and maintenance, which spring from labour, employed in the expectation of a distant return.

The hope, too, of protection became, from the declining state of the empire, as uncertain as the predatory attacks of the Picts and Scots; so that the inhabitants of the Roman province could no longer

place any confidence in a government, whose disorders had a constant tendency to keep their subjects in a state of incapacity for self-defence ; and which sometimes wanted the will, and at others the power, to relieve them from invaders. Whilst the latter, by an harassing warfare, desolated the country, of which they were too weak to take possession.

At a moment, therefore, when a treacherous minister of the emperor Honorius, had A. D. 409. encouraged the surrounding barbarous nations to invade the empire on almost every accessible side ; and when the Roman troops had quitted the island, to support the rebellion of an adventurer, the Britons threw off their yoke ; deposed the imperial magistrates ; and seizing arms, with the spirit of a people aspiring to liberty, and fighting for their own property, drove back their northern invaders.

The following year Honorius sent letters to the British cities, exhorting the inhabitants of A. D. 410. the late Roman province to provide for their own safety. Thus did he, virtually, renounce all claim to any farther authority over them. As this revolution, had been brought about by an universal consciousness of the necessity of the case, and not by the management of any distinguished individual, there was no one person prepared to assume, or to whom the nation was generally disposed to concede the authority, which had thus been relinquished by the Roman emperor. It became, therefore, a common prize, to be disputed for in each city, or district ; and whoever had least diffidence, or was least scrupulous about the means employed in the contest, would be most likely to rise to a short-lived power.

The result seems to have been, that the country was soon divided into a great number of petty independent states ; whose chieftains, having been elevated by fraud and violence over their late equals,

or fellow-townsmen, next employed the same sinful instruments in continued efforts to gratify their ambition, by subjugating each other.

Under such rulers, some vices were directly encouraged; and many others must have been left unrestrained. With wicked princes and a lawless people, the vacant churches would too frequently be allotted to ignorant or profligate clergy. Amidst such forgetfulness of God, a pestilence visited the island, sweeping off the wicked to judgment, and mercifully shortening the trials of the faithful. The weakness to which all these evils reduced the divided nation, encouraged the Picts and Scots to renew and extend their ravages.

Forty years of this misrule, and consequent degradation of the British people, had elapsed, when three Saxon vessels, which might, perhaps, A. D. 449. contain each a hundred men, appeared off the isle of Thanet. They were commanded by two bold adventurers, Hengist and Horsa; and opened a career, which terminated in the conquest of that part of our island, henceforward to be called England.

The people to whom it owes the name of Englelond, or England, were the Angles; previously inhabitants of the district of Anglen, in the dutchy of Sleswick. From them we are called by the French, Anglais. But by our Welch fellow-subjects, the English are still named Saxons; from the most powerful of the combined tribes who subdued their British ancestors. In the Saxon confederacy were likewise comprehended the Jutes; whose name is still preserved in the Danish province of Jutland. The Saxons, properly so called, inhabited the country near the mouth of the Elbe; but the modern kingdom of Saxony, whilst it retains their name, shews that they subsequently moved southward, and took possession of the country higher up the course of that river.

These people had, for some centuries, infested the northern seas with their piracies; and their dangerous employment made them bold and hardy. In the neighbouring nations, whose merchants they had robbed, and whose coasts they pillaged, the peaceable had learned to shudder at their name; whilst the wicked and ambitious were proportionably desirous to gain them as allies. Of the latter character was Vortigern, the British chieftain on whose territories Hengist and Horsa landed at Ebbsfleet, in the isle of Thanet. If Vortigern was the sovereign of a considerable part of Britain, his dominion could only have been acquired by successful invasions of the rights of his neighbours; and what he had done to others, was now to be done to him. He engaged the Saxon adventurers in his service to gain popularity for him by repelling the Picts, and to help him in extending his usurpations over his own countrymen. The isle of Thanet was to be the residence and the reward of the strangers.

For about six years the Saxons served Vortigern so usefully, that he was induced to desire them to invite over more of their brave countrymen. When these arrived, Hengist found himself A. D. 465. strong enough to cope with his employer; and then began the contest of unprincipled ambition. The Saxon ceased to oppose the plundering troops of Picts, and was soon engaged in several combats with the Britons. The exploits of this founder of a new dynasty have been exaggerated, as if he had conquered and desolated half England; but all his battles seem to have been fought in Kent; and though he was able to leave that county as an inheritance to his son Esca, his possession of it was long disputed by the Britons. For even in the 16th year from his entering the island, he had to sus- A. D. 465. tain a fierce encounter with them, on a spot but a few miles distant from the place where he had first landed.

At the very period during which this contest was going on in Kent, the Britons of the west are said to have crossed the seas, to the number of 12,000 men, to take part, as allies of the natives, in a war then desolating Gaul. Thus was the force, which might have been exerted to drive the Saxons quite out of the country, diverted in another direction; either from the little importance which the other British chiefs attached to the struggle between Vortigern and Hengist, or from the want of all national feeling for the welfare of their common country.

The accounts which would reach his countrymen, of the establishment gained by Hengist, and the prospect of getting possession of an ample territory, which had been cultivated and adorned under Roman management, with works of art and towns, instead of the morasses, the forests, and the rude huts of Germany, allured more Saxons to seek their fortunes in Britain. Yet 25 years had elapsed
 A.D. before Ella, the next invader, had gained a
 490. little kingdom for the South Saxons; henceforward called, from them, Sussex.

A.D. A more powerful force, under Cerdic, landed
 493. a few years after, more to the West; and
 A.D. gradually subduing a much larger portion of
 519. the island, formed the kingdom of Wessex.

It was during the struggle which the Western Britons maintained for five and thirty years against Cerdic, that their renowned Prince Arthur is supposed to have displayed his prowess. The fame of this chieftain has been singularly preserved and exaggerated in poems and popular ballads. Historians are perplexed to account for his gaining so extravagant a reputation. He has been described as visiting Jerusalem; as conquering and giving away the kingdoms of France and Norway; and extending his conquests to Russia and Lapland; whilst it is probable that his dominions never ex-

tended 100 miles from Glastonbury in Somersetshire. And his most important military achievements were two undecisive victories; the one gained near Bath, the other near Portsmouth.

The arrival of other Saxon invaders, and the situation of their conquests, with reference to those of their countrymen who had preceded them, are still to be traced in the words Middlesex and Essex, or Eastseax. A. D. 530.

Near these the Angles made themselves masters of a territory, to which was given the name of East Anglia; whose inhabitants, dividing themselves into North folk and South folk, left their appellation to the two counties which, with Cambridgeshire, formed the whole of their dominions. A. D. 560.

The country extending northwards from the Humber to the Forth, was then subdued; and was divided, for a time, into two Anglian states, Bernicia and Deira. These were soon afterwards united into one, and naturally received the name of North-Humber-land. But succeeding changes limited this kingdom to the modern county; which retains that name, though widely separated from the river to which it is allusive.

The most extensive of the kingdoms formed by the Angles was, however, that of the Mercians; who are supposed to have received that name from the circumstance of their first becoming possessed of the *marshes* of Lincolnshire, from which they rapidly advanced in the career of conquest, till they had subdued all the central counties of England. A. D. 586.

Though 150 years had now intervened since the arrival of the first Saxon invaders, the Britons still retained possession of the maritime provinces, bordering on the western coast, from the British channel to the frith of Clyde; including Cornwall, Lan-

cashire, and Cumberland, which became English; that is Saxon counties, at a considerably later period *. A war of conquest extended through so long a series of years, as it indicates the obstinacy of the struggle made by the natives to preserve their property and independence, so it too certainly points out how much misery the conquerors and the conquered must have mutually inflicted; whilst violence, treachery and bloodshed, were the aim of their daily meditations; and every malignant passion, instead of being solicitously repressed, was fostered and invited into action, and applauded most where it was seen to rage most fiercely.

Unhappily the wretched Britons did not, like the Israelites of old, repent of their sins in their affliction, and turn unto the Lord. They seem to have given no heed to the promise, which God has made his Prophet Jeremiah record, that it might stand as an everlasting instruction for the time of overwhelming national calamities—*At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them* †. The bloody sword of the Saxon was now writing, in characters which the most thoughtless could scarcely overlook, *Behold, the Lord frameth evil against you, and deviseth a device against you. Return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.* But the British chiefs seemed incapable of benefiting from this lesson. Their conduct was as though they had said, *there is no hope: therefore we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.* Instead of uniting

* Lancashire in 670. Cumberland was not subdued till 946.

† Jerem. xviii. 7, 8.

to protect their country from the invaders, they were still going on fighting against each other. And their private vices were no less odious than their political ones.

When Gildas, the Briton, wrote his history, the greatest of the native princes was Maglocune; and it might be hoped that he had few equals in wickedness. In his youth he had rebelled against an uncle, and usurped his kingdom. In a moment of remorse for this, he took upon him the vows of a monk. These he broke; seduced the wife of a brother, and, to facilitate his adulteries, murdered that brother and his own wife.

Another British king, who reigned in Cornwall and Devon, was alike polluted with adulteries, and hated for his tyranny. Suspecting that his people might wish to raise some other members of his family to the throne in his stead, he obtained possession of two young relations, by pledging his solemn oath for their safety, and then slew them with their guardians in a church, and in their mother's arms; though the abbot's cope had been thrown over them, in expectation that reverence for the vesture of one, whom he had been trained to believe God's especial servant, might withhold the murderer's hand.

Yet we may rest assured, that the awful lesson which failed to call the nation to repentance, would be made useful in turning the hearts of many from the love of the world, to an earnest desire and most salutary longing after the promises of another life. And the sorrows of those days are, doubtless, now looked back upon with gratitude, so pure and intense as only spiritual natures can feel; by those who have found that the chastening, which was grievous to them during their abode on earth, came from that loving Father who ever intendeth the profit of his children.

Neither are we to believe those writers who ex-

press themselves as if the whole British population of the districts which the Saxons subdued, were either driven out before them, or put to the sword. The gradual extension of their conquests certainly gave those, who chose to fly their country, time to effect their escape. Those parts of the island which remained unsubdued, would, thus, become more populous; whilst they who felt no hopes of a permanent asylum in their native island, fled, with many of their bishops and nobles, to the coast of Gaul, in such numbers as to give their name to a province, still called from them Brittany, or Bretagne. It was to distinguish the country they had left, from this new British settlement, that our island received, henceforward, its name of *Great Britain*. But merciless robbers as the Saxons were, they could not be blind to the advantage of saving the lives of their captives; to make them till, as slaves, the lands whose cultivation they understood so much better than their rude conquerors. A nation of pirates knew little of agriculture; nor were they likely to seek for pleasure in its labours. And it is incredible that, amidst the struggles of a protracted warfare, they should have preferred the risk of laying down their swords, in the sight of their enemies, and raising their food by toiling at the plough, to employing the slaves made on the spot. In fact the captive Britons were a valuable part of the spoil; and it appears from an authentic record *Doomsday Book*, that, as late as the eleventh century, the slaves of the Saxons were more numerous than their masters.

BOOK II.

ENGLAND UNDER THE SAXONS.

CHAPTER I.

Saxon Heptarchy. Arrival and reception of Roman Missionaries.

FROM the division of England amongst seven independent Saxon states, the period of its history, at which we are now arrived, is called that of the Saxon Heptarchy *.

We have already noticed the foundation of these seven states; and, though mutual wars soon changed their boundaries, the country was divided in nearly the following manner.

1. THE KINGDOM OF KENT,
extended over about the same ground as the modern county.
2. THE KINGDOM OF THE SOUTH SAXONS,
comprehended Sussex and Surrey.
3. THE KINGDOM OF THE WEST SAXONS, OR OF
WESSEX,
contained Hampshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, and parts of Devon; perhaps also some portion of Cornwall.

* Heptarchy is a word formed from the Greek, and means a government of seven.

4. **THE KINGDOM OF THE EAST SAXONS**,
in which were included Essex, Middlesex,
and parts of Hertfordshire.

5. **THE KINGDOM OF THE EAST ANGLES**,
comprehended Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge-
shire, Huntingdonshire, and parts of North-
amptonshire and Bedfordshire.

6. **THE KINGDOM OF THE MERCIANS, OR MIDDLE
ANGLES**
stretched over Lincolnshire, Nottingham-
shire, Rutland, Leicestershire, Warwick,
Worcester, Stafford, Derby, Oxford, Glou-
cester, Hereford, and parts of Northampton,
Bedford, Hertford, and Salop.

7. **NORTHUMBERLAND** was as yet subdivided into
the two kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia.

1. **DEIRA** contained,
Yorkshire, Westmoreland, Durham, with
parts of Lancashire and Cumberland.

2. **BERNICA** contained
Northumberland, and great part of the Low-
lands of Scotland, south of the Forth.

Thus was England still divided into different na-
tions; between whom, notwithstanding their recent
common origin from confederate tribes, mutual
aggressions and injuries soon engendered hostile
feelings.

The level nature of the country afforded few
natural boundaries, to prevent the subjects of one
Saxon king from making daily inroads on the terri-
tories of his neighbour; and whilst the number of
independent states occasioned frequent causes of
dispute, it also brought the hostile parties too much
within the reach of those miseries, which the pas-
sions of each disposed them to inflict. Their sever-
al chieftains, too, had learned but to live for the

pleasures of ambition and revenge; and were unacquainted with any God, save those false ones, whom their depraved imaginations had painted like evil spirits, as loving blood and slaughter, and rejoicing in destruction. But, though they dreaded the interference of no heavenly power to punish their unjust aggressions or ferocious cruelty, they do seem to have devised the plan of delegating to one of their body, with the title of Bretwalda, or governor of Britain, some sort of controlling authority; apparently to save the weaker kings from being pillaged, or oppressed without a pretext by the strong.

It was but a rude device; for they do not seem to have advanced so far in their policy, as either to have laid down rules for the succession to this office, or as to the extent of the Bretwalda's authority. Hence there would naturally arise frequent wars between rival princes, to gain this superior title. And when any one had succeeded to it, he was soon involved in other wars to obtain the obedience, or deference, which he thought due to his dignified office.

The first person, whom we know to have held the dignity of Bretwalda, was Ella, the founder of Sussex; who is supposed to have owed the A.D. pre-eminence, allowed him here, to the rank 490. he previously held in his native country.

The next Bretwalda, handed down to us A.D. in history as such, is Ceawlin, king of Wessex, 568. the grandson of Cerdic.

All that is farther known of these two, is no more than might be told of the tiger, or the wolf. They lived and fought; indulged without compunction in blood, and died.

On the death of Ceawlin, the rank of Bretwalda was conceded to Ethelbert, king of A.D. Kent. 596.

Here we again perceive the merciful hand of God. He had now determined to restore the light

of the Gospel, though somewhat dimmed by the inventions of men, to the inhabitants of this island; and the extension of Ethelbert's influence would naturally facilitate the diffusion of the creed which that chieftain was to be led to adopt. The purposes of God are sometimes peculiarly marked by his bringing instruments far asunder, and events apparently very unconnected, to co-operate in his service.

A monk, named Gregory, an humble and zealous servant of Christ, walking in the public market of Rome, was struck with the pleasing countenance and fair complexion of some poor youths, who were exposed as slaves for sale; and enquired who, and whence they were. He was answered, that they had been brought from the island of Britain; the general appearance of whose inhabitants was such as he now saw. He next asked if the people were Christians; and, being informed they were still heathens, exclaimed with a deep sigh, 'Alas, that the prince of darkness should keep possession of such fair faces.' When the slave-dealer added, that the people were called Angles, the sound immediately associated itself with their personal appearance, and with his wishes, to gain them for the kingdom of heaven. 'Angles,' said he, 'they are well called so. They have angels' faces; and it is fitting that they be made joint heirs with the angels in heaven.' The name of their province, Deira, was caught up in the same tone: 'De ira,' from wrath, 'Yes, they must be snatched from the wrath of God, and called to mercy.' While this benevolent idea was floating in his mind, he heard that their kings name was Ella; and, converting it into an omen of success, exclaimed, 'Allelujah; there shall Allelujahs be sung to the Creator's praise.'

Let not the reader fastidiously sneer at the harmless jingle of sounds, which it was the taste of Gregory to admire. The conduct with which he

was prepared to follow up this conversation, would well deserve sincere respect in any age. He was willing to quit his native country, and renounce the respect he enjoyed, and the elevated situation he held in its still important capital, to attempt the conversion of a cruel race of barbarians, in a distant island. But the people of Rome rose in mutiny, to force the Pope to keep their favourite at home.

Not long after this Gregory found himself, unwillingly, elevated to that office, which so many have since aspired to reach, by all the arts of fraud and corruption. The people and the emperor united in compelling him to accept the pa-^{A.D. 590.}cy. He would much have preferred to serve God in peace and retirement. There is every reason for believing that he expressed himself with sincerity, when writing to a friend who had complimented him on his promotion, he said; 'I attach no importance to the congratulations of strangers on my advancement. But it is a serious grief to me, that you, who know me thoroughly, should felicitate me upon the occasion. You have long known my wish; could I have been gratified in it, I should have obtained the rest which I sought.'

In his eyes the office of Pope involved the care, and the awful responsibility of watching over all the churches of Europe; excepting those of Greece. The large portion of Christ's flock, which he found placed, by common opinion, under his superintendence, seemed to Gregory too laborious a charge for one who had his own soul to watch over. He felt this, because he understood the labours required from a true shepherd. 'Weighty indeed,' said he on another occasion, 'is the office of a pastor. He must be an example to the flock; and, after this, he must learn to keep himself humble. He must ever be intent on the ministry of the word; remembering,

who hath said, Occupy till I come. This we then only truly execute, when by life and doctrine we win the souls of our neighbours; strengthen the weak, by setting before them the joys of the heavenly kingdom; and band the proud, by sounding aloud the punishments of hell; when we spare none at the expence of truth; and, when given up to heavenly friendships, we fear not human enmity. I tremble at my own infirmity. How shall I look up at the last judgment, seeing so very little fruit of my labours?

The ambition of his later predecessors, aided and encouraged by the long established and widely diffused reverence then felt for the name of Rome, had attached to the office of Roman bishop, the extensive jurisdiction which Gregory, with becoming humility, feared he should not be able duly to superintend. Still more would he have shrunk from the yet wider field of labour claimed by those, who assume that to them belongs the title of Universal Bishop over the whole Christian world. So far was Gregory from supposing that this belonged to him, or anticipating that it would be assumed by the Popes his successors, that the patriarch of Constantinople happening, in his time, to set up for himself a claim to this lofty designation, in consequence of his rank in the imperial court, Gregory boldly reprov'd him; declaring, that no man could without the height of arrogance, assume a title, which robs Christ of the office he has reserved to himself.

The humility of Gregory was blessed with its reward; for that dangerous authority, which had fallen to his lot uncoveted, was not permitted to become a snare to him. By it he gained the influence requisite to enable him to become one of God's chief instruments in recovering England to Christianity.

For this purpose Gregory sent from Rome a train of forty monks, with Augustine at their head. But, when they had advanced as far as France,

they were seized with terror at the accounts they there heard of the Saxons, and their barbarous cruelty. They were, in consequence, more than half resolved to return home; instead of proceeding to put themselves in the power of a fierce nation of heathens, with whose language, even, they were unacquainted. Happily, they felt it an imperative duty to obey an urgent letter, which the Pope wrote to them, on their requesting his permission to relinquish their journey. But whilst Gregory pressed them not to allow themselves to be deterred from their good good work by any difficulties, he at the same time wrote to Brunehault, a queen of the Franks, to protect their passage by her influence; and to assist in procuring interpreters, to accompany them into Britain. Brunehault was a woman whose wickedness and cruelty might have made her as much an object of terror as the Saxons; but, providentially, it suited her ambitious views to endeavour to win the favour of the Clergy; so she readily did all in her power to meet the Pope's wishes.

Their admission, and their reception in Britain, were farther prepared by the circumstance of Ethelbert's having married Bertha, the daughter of Charibert, king of Paris; a Christian princess. When she left her father's court, it had been stipulated that a Christian minister should be permitted to attend her; and a church in Canterbury, which had been built before the Saxon invasion, and had remained undestroyed, was assigned for the minister's use. When, therefore, Augustine and his companions had landed in the isle of Thanet, and sent a message to the king, purporting that they were the bearers of happy intelligence, being no less than the promise of eternal happiness, to those who would attend to their words; their messengers found Ethelbert predisposed to receive them favourably.

It will not escape observation, that the mission-

aries who now visited Britain were monks. To suppose from this, that they were infected with all the superstitions, which degraded the monks of later days, would neither be charitable nor correct; but still the very formation and existence of the monastic order was a mark, that though Antichrist had by no means reached his full growth, his reign was beginning; seeing he had advanced as far "*as forbidding to marry* *." He had also seduced many, having a *seal of God, but not according to knowledge*, to slight the Apostle's observation, that they will *justly be condemned*, who say, *Let us do evil, that good may come*. That the piety of these missionaries was sincere is evident, from their devoting themselves to this labour of love, in the face, as they believed, of great dangers, and of real difficulties. Yet we shall see them making little scruple of using deceit, where they thought it likely to advance the cause of religion; forgetting that *lying wonders* had been announced as a certain mark of *the working of Satan*.

On receiving Augustine's message, Ethelbert moved, with his little court, to meet him in the isle of Thanet. Here the Saxon king took his seat in the open air, under the notion that, if the strangers practised magic, it would have less influence over him than within the walls of a house. And now he ordered the missionaries to be called before him. They approached, chaunting Latin litanies; and bearing aloft a silver cross and a banner, on which was depicted an image of our Saviour. After a short conference, Ethelbert is said to have told them, that their words were fair, but that he could not yet give up for novelties the long established customs of his nation. That in return, however, for their having come so far, with the wish of communicating to him and his people what they sincerely

* 1 Tim. iv. 3.

believed to be true and excellent, he would provide them with a maintenance, as his guests; and that they were at liberty to make such converts as they could. He farther assigned them a residence at Canterbury, where they could use the same ancient church as had been assigned to Bertha's chaplain. They entered Canterbury in similar procession; chaunting, with one voice, 'We beseech thee, O Lord, of thy mercy, turn away thine anger from this city, and from thy holy house; for we have sinned; Hallelujah.'

The solemn music, and these imposing ceremonies, were well calculated to make the king, and his nobles view the offered religion as much more stately in its forms, than the rude customs of their ferocious idolatry; and would induce them to make no great difficulty about accepting a system of worship, which had so much handsomer an appearance than their own. But these shows would, obviously, be but a bad preparation for teaching a people, whose thoughts had hitherto been confined to the objects of sense, that the God now announced to them was a Spirit, in whose sight external forms were of little consequence, compared with the surrender of the heart, and the entire change of the inclinations of the natural man.

In their abode at Canterbury, indeed, we are told that they preached the word of life; and exhibited, in their own conduct, the manners and religion of primitive Christianity. Their notion of primitive Christianity, however, seems to have comprehended more of bodily austerities than the Gospel requires; but this only made it the better adapted for attracting the admiration of the rude Saxons. Ignorant people, accustomed to indulge their own coarse passions without any controul, have frequently been found ready to pay unbounded veneration to those who exhibit, before them, any striking instances of excessive self-denial; particularly if they are not

required to consider the imitation of such austerities as necessary, but only as means of procuring the extraordinary favour of Heaven for such as may voluntarily submit to them.

The companions of Augustine, being monks, could not be expected to discountenance such erroneous views. Whenever the Gospel requires any thing of Christians, it thereby teaches us a duty, which every man must perform; or confess and repent of his disobedience. But the inventors of the monastic orders demanded a kind of self-denial, which they could not call a necessary duty; and whoever consented to impose it upon himself, was encouraged to think that he, thereby, did for God more than God had required at his hands. A most awful and presumptuous error!

Such deviations from the genuine spirit of the Gospel, seldom stand alone. The reader, therefore, need not be surprised at hearing, that, in addition to their other means of attracting admiration, the Roman missionaries managed to induce the Saxons to believe them possessed of the power of working miracles. It is well known, that the Almighty had been pleased to discontinue the gift of this power, long before the period of which we are now writing. The pretence to it must, therefore, have been maintained by fraud.

We have already remarked, that neither charity nor correct reasoning will allow us to assume from this, that Augustine and his monks were mere hypocrites. Let us rather learn to be thankful, that we live in a time of greater light, than that in which zealous servants of God could think of promoting His honour by making a lie. Perhaps, too, the faithfulness of God is never more conspicuously shewn forth, than when the misconduct of those, who are striving to extend the church of Christ, makes it evident, that the abundant success which has followed their labours, has not been bestowed

for their sakes; but for His to whom God has promised that, whenever He *asketh it, the heathen shall be given to Him for His inheritance.*

In a very short time, Ethelbert declared himself convinced, and was baptized. His example and influence naturally drew great part of his subjects in his train; but it is pleasing to read that, by the advice of his new guides, he abstained from attempting to force the change of religion on any. The service of Christ, they told him, must be undertaken voluntarily; it could not be acceptably performed under compulsion.

On the other hand, the crowds whom Augustine rapidly admitted to the sacrament of baptism, are represented as so numerous, that, it is obvious, neither he nor his companions could have properly impressed upon these nominal converts, *what a solemn vow, promise and profession*, they were, by that rite, taking upon them.

Augustine, however, thought Christianity now so firmly planted in the country, that he crossed over to the continent; and was episcopally ordained, as head of the English Church, by the bishop of Arles. He also sent off messengers to Gregory, announcing his success; and requesting his advice on various points likely to be brought before him for decision. Gregory expressed the greatest joy and thankfulness at the news of his success; sent out more missionaries to his assistance, and dictated the formation of twenty-four bishoprics; settling questions of precedence, as if the whole island had already consented, not only to receive Christianity, but to submit the management of the church entirely to the Roman See.

To Augustine's questions he sent detailed answers. They related to mere matters of ecclesiastical discipline, and would not be deserving of any notice, but that one of them affords decisive evidence, that the Roman clergy were not yet compelled to remain

in perpetual celibacy; the other, that even the pope did not consider the Roman church as that perfect model, whose observances all other churches must adopt and follow. Augustine asks; Whether such of the clergy as would be tempted to sin, if single, may marry? And, if they do, whether they must altogether quit an ecclesiastical life? To which Gregory answers, that such ought to marry; and should afterwards receive their allowance without the precincts of the monastery; but must lead a temperate and good life, and be kept under ecclesiastical rules.

In answer to another question, respecting the different customs of the Roman and Gallic churches, Gregory tells Augustine, that he would advise him to choose carefully for his new church, what was best among the various observances of many churches. "For," says he, "the thing is not to be loved for the place in which it is found; but the place is to be loved for the good things in it."

On another subject, Gregory's advice cannot be acquitted of indiscretion. He charged Mellitus, afterwards bishop of London, to tell Augustine that he should destroy all idols, but preserve their temples for churches; procuring relics, and using aspersions of holy water to sanctify them; that the people may come together without difficulty, to worship God in their old haunts. And, whereas they were accustomed to slay oxen in sacrifices to their demons, "Let them," said he, "keep festivals on the day of dedication, or of the birth of some martyr to a life in heaven. On such occasions, let them build booths of branches about their former temples, and killing cattle to eat, rejoice, and be thankful." By this temporising policy, the people would be encouraged in viewing Christianity merely as a new system of ceremonies, better suited to their advance in civilization than their ancient barbarous worship; whilst the solemn rejoicings of the church over spi-

ritual blessings, were identified with rude feasting and intemperance, of which the annual recurrence was thus fixed, and suffered to gain increasing strength from passing ages.

That part of Gregory's advice, which was better than would have been given by his successors, they easily overruled. Whilst that which was imprudent still continues to generate evil. Who can name the day, whilst this world lasts, in which his personal vices, or his infirmities, will certainly have ceased to propagate farther offences before God?

CHAPTER II.

Farther Progress of Christianity.

FROM Kent Augustine turned his attention to the neighbouring kingdom of Essex. Sabert, its sovereign, was nephew to Ethelbert; and his A.D. 603. influence procured a ready reception for Christianity throughout his nephew's territories; in which London was comprehended, and became the see of Mellitus. By this time Augustine had learned what was probably unknown at Rome, from the interruption of all communication with the Britons; that the British church still existed in the western parts of the island, and comprehended a numerous body of native clergy. He invited them to meet him; and they assembled in conference at a place long after called Augustine's oak, in Worcestershire. The desirableness of combining their efforts with those of the Roman missionaries, might reasonably induce Augustine to summon this synod. But, A.D. 604. when they met, it was found that the two parties differed, with regard to such customs as had grown into use in the church of Rome since the Britons had been cut off from communication with it.

Augustine, forgetting the liberal language of Gregory's advice, pressed the Britons so unreasonably with the necessity of conforming to several ecclesiastical regulations, at variance with those to which they were accustomed, that his importunity led to obstinate debates. At length, as a way of terminating the dispute, he said, "Let us pray to God, who maketh brethren to be of one mind in their father's house, that he would deign to teach us by a sign from heaven, which tradition ought to be followed; and by what paths we may best speed in our way to heaven. Let some bodily sufferer be brought before us, that we may see by whose prayers he shall be healed; and let us agree to follow the faith thus sanctioned by God." The Britons acquiesced in this proposal; but not without evident reluctance, as fearing, no doubt, some fraud.

A Saxon boy, said to be blind, was now brought forward, and offered to the British clergy, for the benefit of their prayers; but in vain. Augustine next went through the awful mockery of an appeal to Heaven. The Saxon immediately declared that he saw the light; and the people exclaimed, that Augustine was the true preacher of spiritual light.

Had Augustine's appeal procured the restoration of sight for a Briton, put before him by the British party, his management would have been less obvious; but this was a piece of palpable jugglery and collusion. Yet it staggered the representatives of the British clergy, and they consented to a second conference. On their way to the place of meeting, they visited the cell of a British hermit of considerable reputation for sanctity and prudence; and asked his advice, as to the propriety of retaining, or giving up, the points of difference between themselves and Augustine. "If he is a man of God," said he, "follow his counsel." "But how," they asked, "can we ascertain whether he is so?" "Our Lord," he replied, said, "Take my yoke upon you, and I will teach you, for I am meek and lowly in heart. If,

therefore, this Augustine be meek and lowly in heart, it may be presumed that as he bears the yoke of Christ, he will offer to put no other on you. But if he be assuming and proud, it is plain that he is not taught of God; and we need pay no attention to his words." They farther asked, "How shall we be able to distinguish what his disposition is?" "Manage," said he, "so that Augustine and his party may arrive before you; and, if he rises on your approach, listen to him attentively, as a servant of Christ. But if he despises you, and, though you are more in number, will not rise up on your entrance, he is unworthy of your attention."

They did as the hermit advised. Augustine continued seated in his chair at the approach of the British party, consisting of seven bishops and several divines; and they said to each other, "If this man already thinks too meanly of us, to pay us the civil attention of rising from his seat, what can we expect if we put ourselves under his authority?" They refused, therefore, to consent to his proposals, and the assembly broke up in anger.

There must have been a deplorable want of humility, and Christian love on both sides, to prevent their uniting for the conversion of the surrounding pagans. For of the questions in dispute between them, that to which they attached the most importance, was but whether the festival of our Lord's resurrection should be regulated by the 14th or 13th day of the moon's age, or by this or that calendar. The just judgment of God soon visited each with humiliation.

Ethelfrith, king of Bernicia, extending his conquests to the vicinity of Chester, found a British army drawn up to oppose him; and enquired A.D.
610. the meaning of a crowd which he saw, on the flank of the hostile army, in peculiar habits. They were British clergy, principally monks; and he was told, that they were offering up prayers to Heaven,

for the success of their countrymen. If so, said he, they are praying for our destruction. Let them be first attacked. The British troops, instead of protecting them, took flight at the approach of the Saxons; and Ethelfrith, having massacred 1,200 of these unarmed victims, pushed on, and destroyed the great neighbouring monastery of Bangor, whose numerous inmates were at once industrious cultivators of the ground, and the most learned body in their nation.

In Saxon Britain, Sæberct, king of Essex, and Ethelbert, the Bretwalda, from the time of their conversion, had ruled their people peaceably; and Ethelbert had given his Kentish subjects a written code of laws. But they were succeeded by
A. D. 616. sons who hated a religion which forbade their sins; and, therefore, restored idolatry. Mel-

litus Bishop of London, and Justus Bishop of Rochester, returned in despair to the continent. Laurentius, the successor of Augustine in the see of Canterbury, made preparations to follow them; but, before his departure, he determined to make one farther trial, to recover that influence over Eadbald king of Kent, which he had possessed with his father Ethelbert. It is lamentable to observe, however, that instead of having recourse to fair persuasion, and to prayer, for the blessing of God upon it, Laurentius, like Augustine, thought it permitted to venture on evil, that good might come. He gave orders that a bed should be prepared for him, that night, in the church. Early the next morning he waited on the king; and, throwing off his garments, showed him his skin lacerated with stripes. Eadbald had yet some respect for a person who had stood high in his father's esteem, and though he wished to be rid of a troublesome monitor, who had reproached him for taking his father's widow to his bed, he did not chuse to have him ill treated by his dependents. He asked, therefore, who had dared

to commit this outrage on the bishop. In reply, Laurentius told him a story of his having passed the first hours of the night in prayer, for the welfare of the king and his people, and then lain down to rest. But that the Apostle Peter had appeared to him, and inflicting those stripes of which he bore the marks, had told him, they were the just punishment of his intending to forsake his flock, instead of imitating the example of the Apostles, whose readiness to die for theirs had been rewarded with crowns of glory. The king listened to this account in deep astonishment, without conjecturing that the bishop could have, voluntarily, undergone the severe scourging of which his eyes saw the bleeding marks; and when he heard that the bishop had been so stricken, merely for declining to persist in pressing exhortations, which he himself had ventured to despise, he was seized with terror and contrition; put away his father's widow; and, forbidding all idolatrous worship, became sincerely convinced of the importance of Christianity.

The sinfulness of the means, employed by Laurentius, was not allowed to prevent his flock from receiving the benefits, which he was so zealous to procure for them. Essex and London lost the blessings of religion for a longer period; but the light soon burst out in another quarter.

Redwald, king of the East Angles, had visited Ethelbert, and consented, at his persuasion, to become a Christian. The change in him, however, was neither deep nor permanent. When he returned home he relapsed; yet not so as to dismiss the Christian teachers, who had accompanied him, in the hope of converting his people. About this time, Edwin, prince of Deira, took refuge at Redwald's court. His dominions, on his father's death, had been usurped by Ethelfrith; whilst some faithful servants had conveyed him, then a child, out of the usurper's reach, and placed him under the care

of Cadvañ, king of North Wales. The main object of Ethelfrith, in the war which led to his murdering so many of the British clergy, had been to force Cadvan to surrender the boy; and Edwin, driven for years from one temporary shelter to another, now came a young man to throw himself on the protection of Redwald, in his character of Bretwalda; which dignity had, on Ethelbert's death,

Redwald, king of the East Angles, Bretwalda IV. passed from the kings of Kent to the East Angles. Here he was again pursued by the jealousy of Ethelfrith; whose offers, or threats, disposed Red-

wald to put the youth to death. It was night when Edwin received intimation of his intentions, from one, who supposing them on the eve of execution, summoned him from his chamber, and bade him flee to a safer place. "I have known too much misery," said he, "already, to fly farther. If I die, let it be by the king's order." And he sat him down near Redwald's gate, musing over his misfortunes, till he scarcely knew whether he was awake, or saw a vision, when a venerable person in a strange habit (such that of a Roman missionary at a Saxon court would seem to him) told him, he knew what kept him watchful there, while others slept—but, that he might lay aside his fears. Redwald would not betray him; nay, would probably reinstate him in his hereditary dominions—he might, yet, become more powerful than any of the Saxon princes. When these hopes should be fulfilled, the stranger said, he must listen to the instructions which would be offered, to teach him the way to secure eternal life. Edwin readily gave his promise; and the stranger, laying his hand upon the youth's head, said, "When this sign shall be repeated, remember what has now passed between us; and keep the promise you have given."

The person, who spoke thus, had, in all likelihood, joined or encouraged Redwald's wife in the spirited

exhortation by which she brought her husband to the better resolution of defending the youth, in whom he had observed marks of a character likely to form a good and able sovereign.

As the same person foresaw, Redwald, refusing to comply with Ethelfrith's desire, was obliged to arm and defend himself, as well as Edwin, from the cruel Bernicia. Their forces met on the banks of the Idel, in Nottinghamshire. Ethelfrith perished in the battle; and Redwald, following up the victory, the Deirans received their long lost prince with acclamations of joy, whilst the people of Bernicia submitted to him as their conqueror. From the Humber northwards, to the extremity of the Saxon colonies, thus became subject to the persecuted Edwin, henceforward king of Northumberland; and soon after, on Redwald's death, acknowledged as Bretwalda V.

In the ninth year of his reign, Edwin married Edelburga, the sister of Eadbald, king of Kent. It was stipulated that she should enjoy the free exercise of her religion; and Paulinus, one of the missionaries sent to England in Gregory's time, accompanied and remained with her. Paulinus wished to convert the king; but observing that Edwin lent a very impatient ear to his arguments, he desisted, and contented himself with waiting for a *more convenient season*. A.D. 625.

Something in Edwin's conduct had excited the envy, or the fears of Cwichelm, king of Wessex; who sent an assassin, named Eumer, as the bearer of a message to the king. Eumer was readily admitted into Edwin's presence. Under his clothes he had concealed a two-edged dagger, dipped in poison. He calmly began the delivery of his feigned message, to put the king off his guard; but in the midst of it, clenching his dagger, he aimed at him a

sudden and violent stroke. This action had caught the eye of Lilla, a faithful attendant, who, rushing between the assassin and his master, received the fatal blow in his own body. Before Eumer could be disarmed, another of the king's friends was killed, in the struggle which took place about his person.

The danger had been great; and Edwin's escape was evidently providential. The same day his queen was delivered of their first child, a daughter. The king's heart was filled with gratitude for his preservation, and for this farther domestic blessing; and he fervently offered thanks to his gods. Paulinus was present, and ventured to tell the king that it was not to those idols, but to the God of the Christians, and to his wife's prayers, that he was beholden for these mercies. In the present state of Edwin's mind, he listened with kind attention to what was spoken with an evident desire to promote his happiness; and yielding to his wife's wishes, he permitted Paulinus to baptize the infant and twelve of the persons of his household. He farther promised, that if God would favour him with victory in the war which he was about to take, to revenge himself on Cwichelm, he also would be baptized.

The spirit of vengeance was no fit preparation for turning to God to seek remission of sins, nor for entering into covenant with Him who *is love*. He defeated Cwichelm; and the persons who had devised his assassination, were given up to punishment, as they well deserved; but though Edwin, henceforward, sacrificed no more to his false gods, the task of subduing his heart to the reception of the humbling truths of the Gospel, must have been rendered more difficult than before, by events which had placed within his reach the gratification of many evil passions.

His understanding, indeed, was open to the arguments in favour of Christianity; but his nature

disposed him to prefer being the hard worked slave of pride and ambition, rather than be the adopted child of a gracious, but holy God.

That God had mercy in store for Edwin's heathen subjects; and his conversion was to be the means of opening the way to theirs; so he was not left in that blindness from which he seemed but too reluctant to be healed. The pope, Boniface, sent him a kind and truly Christian letter; and as he sat alone, meditating on the awful questions thus brought before his mind, Paulinus, entering the chamber, laid his hand upon the king's head, and asked him, If he remembered that token. - Edwin started at the appeal, as if a messenger from heaven stood before him; and fell at Paulinus's feet. 'Behold,' said the missionary, raising him up, 'the mercy of God has saved thee from the enemies of whom thou wast in fear! Behold, the mercy of God has restored thee thy kingdom, and obtained for thee the pre-eminence which was promised! Remember now thine own promise, and observe it.'

Whether Paulinus had had the scene, which passed at Redwald's gate, related to him by one of his colleagues; or whether he had himself been the mysterious visitor who encouraged Edwin in that night of despair, and had afterwards accompanied Edelburga as her spiritual instructor, to see if haply, after many days, he might find any fruit from the seed which had *been cast upon the waters* for God's blessing; he had watched with equal patience and prudence for a favourable opportunity; and now he was permitted to rejoice in reaping an abundant harvest.

Edwin no longer withstood the merciful calls of God. And like one who had embraced Christianity from the heart, he convoked the council of his chiefs; that, if they could be persuaded to think as he did, all might accept it as their national religion.

A.D.
627.

Coifi, the pagan priest, is said to have declared to this assembly, that he could not continue to set any value on gods who had allowed others, less attentive to their worship than he, to rise above him in wealth and prosperity.

Another speaker had recourse to an illustration descriptive of the customs of his age. "O king," said he, "I have seen a sparrow, in the winter, fly through the hall wherein you and your chiefs and servants were feasting. The hearth was blazing, and the viands were smoking within, but, without, the storm was raging with rain or snow. The bird enters at one door, and in a few minutes it is gone out at another. He felt nothing of the weather during the short time that he was flying about amongst us; but when he had enjoyed this happiness, for a brief space, he was again carried into the storm without; and we saw him no more. The life of man seems to me like the passage of this bird; whence it came, and in what it ends, we know not. If, therefore, this new teaching can remove our darkness in these matters, it well deserves our acceptance."

Paulinus, also, was permitted to address the assembled chiefs; and, in conclusion, Coifi declared his readiness to lead the way in destroying their former vain gods, with their altars. He asked the king to supply him with arms and a horse; both of them forbidden things for a priest of the pagan Saxons; and thus accoutred, he rode up, and threw a lance into the consecrated inclosure of the temple. The place where this scene passed, was supposed to be a favourite residence of Odin and Thor, and the other gods whom the superstitious Saxons feared; from whence it was called Godmundingaham*. When the multitude saw their priest thus daringly

* But now Godmundham only, or more corruptly, Goodmanham; a village near Market-Weighton, about ten miles north of the Humber.

insult their gods, whom they considered as both powerful and revengeful beings, they thought him mad; but when they observed that no thunderbolt punished his rashness, they concluded that the images, before which they had been accustomed to tremble, were but helpless figures. Their fear was rapidly converted into contempt; and they joined, at Coifi's bidding, in setting fire to the temple; which was thus destroyed, with its idols, in a few hours.

Paulinus, now, found the people more ready to receive his words than to examine them. The whole Northumbrian population were willing to follow the example of their chiefs, and to be admitted, by so easy a rite as baptism, to take the name of Christians. But a single missionary could do little towards imparting the instruction necessary to make them more than Christians in name. In this necessary work, it is probable, that Paulinus received the assistance of some of the British, and of the Scottish clergy from Ireland. For the Scotch had not yet entirely deserted that island for their present country; and religion flourished there. They differed, indeed, from the Romish Church on the same points as the Britons did, but Paulinus seems to have had more, both of wisdom, and of a truly Christian temper, than Augustine. This spirit would lead him, thankfully, to take advantage of their zeal; and we find it recorded, a few years later, that the Scottish clergy were most actively employed in maintaining the knowledge of Christ in these parts.

York became Paulinus's see; and the good conduct of Edwin, in his government, proved the sincerity of his royal convert. It was said, long after, that in the days of Edwin, a woman, with a babe at her breast, might travel securely over his whole dominions. And his placing cisterns by the road side, with brazen cups attached to them for the thirsty

travellers use, was, to the Saxons, an unprecedented mark of a charitable religion.

For seventeen years Edwin reigned in uninterrupted prosperity; and by his influence Eorpwald, son of Redwald, was led to abjure idolatry, but did not live long enough to see many of his East Anglian subjects follow his example.

Prosperity, however, proved to Edwin a severer trial than adversity. He became haughty; and finding himself engaged in a war with, and victorious over Cadwallon, the son of that Cadvan who had preserved his life from Ethelfrith, almost at the expence of his crown, Edwin followed up his victory with such unrelenting enmity, as drove the British king to seek a temporary refuge in Ireland. Let the reader, who is shocked at Edwin's thus forgetting the debt of gratitude, which he owed to the protector of his persecuted infancy, bless God that he has not exposed him to those generally coveted temptations, worldly greatness, and long continued good fortune, under which the king of Northumberland fell. Yet we may hope that before the immediate punishment, which he met with, brought Edwin's life to a close, it had the effect of humbling him to a salutary conviction of his sin.

For seven years he retained Anglesea, and great part of North Wales under subjection; whilst Cadwallon, its king, was a wandering exile. At length the dethroned prince besought and obtained the help of Penda, king of Mercia; a decisive
A.D. 633. battle was fought on Hatfield Chase, in Yorkshire; and Edwin perished, with the greater portion of his army.

Penda, whose skill and courage had defeated the Northumbrians, was fifty years of age when he began to reign over Mercia (A.D. 626); and this fierce heathen king was permitted to live and retain his faculties and activity to the age of eighty, to be the scourge of England.

The conquerors ravaged Edwin's dominions; and his wife and family fled with Paulinus to the protection of her brother Eadbald.

Their flight, and the murder of two other Northumbrian princes, by the sword of Cadwallon, made room for Oswald, a son of Ethelfrith. During Edwin's reign, he had been brought up in the island of Iona; and had, happily, imbibed there the principles of sincere religion. When he revisited his native land, to claim his inheritance, and undertake its defence, Penda had withdrawn his forces; but Cadwallon was still in arms, aspiring to recover for the Britons all the northern portion of the Saxon conquests. Oswald was *but a youth*, whilst his enemy was *a man of war from his youth*; but the cruelties of Cadwallon had produced in the Northumbrians the formidable courage of desperation. A small, but brave army, gathered round their prince. They came in sight of the British forces at the dawn of day, and found them negligently scattered about Hexham. "Soldiers," said Oswald, "let us kneel, and beg of the true and living God to grant us His protection against our arrogant and cruel enemies. He knows that our cause is just, and that we fight but to save our country." His command was obeyed; and, rising from their knees with a determined spirit, they defeated and slew Cadwallon, with the flower of his army. A. D. 634.

No sooner was Oswald secure on his throne, than he applied to the instructors of his youth for some one to re-settle Christianity among his people. Oswald, king of Northumberland, Bretwalda VI. Cormor was sent; a monk of a harsh and rigid disposition, who soon returned to his monastery, disgusted with the dullness and obstinacy of the Saxons, which he declared, before his assembled brethren, to be invincible. "Brother," exclaimed one, "the fault was yours. You exacted, from the bar-

barians, more than their weakness could bear. They should have been treated like infants, with milk, till they became capable of stronger meat." This sensible reproof turned every eye upon the speaker; and Aidan, that was his name, was requested to take upon himself the office which Cormac had, too easily, given up in despair.

The choice was a happy one. Oswald gave Aidan Lindisfarn, afterwards called Holy Island, for the seat of his bishopric; and whilst he exerted himself with unwearied zeal for the conversion of his people, he bore himself so discreetly on the points of difference between the antient churches and those planted by the Roman missionaries, as to gain the esteem and respect of Honorius, who at that time presided in the south of England over the latter.

Oswald gave the most cordial support to all Aidan's efforts. By their invitation a number of Scottish and Irish missionaries came and settled in his dominions. Churches were built; and the knowledge of the Gospel was so firmly established, that the people of Northumberland were long pre-eminent in enlightened piety above the other Saxon nations. The king himself seems to have been peculiarly blessed with power to conduct himself in a manner that must have impressed, most forcibly, on his subjects, the excellence of the religion which he was so anxious to have them adopt. On one occasion, as he was keeping the festival of Easter, a silver dish was placed before him full of dainties; but, when the blessing was about to be pronounced, the servant who had been ordered to distribute his bounty to the poor, informed Oswald that the street was crowded with hungry persons, still asking for alms. The reflection, that many of his fellow-creatures must too frequently want the food necessary to satisfy the most pressing calls of hunger, made the king shrink from the idea of indulging in a

feast, while the necessities of any were unrelieved. He ordered the food untouched to be taken out, and given to the supplicants; and the silver dish to be sold, and its value disposed of in a similar manner.

How happy a change in that kingdom, where his father Ethelfrith, so far from being instructed to strive after temperance and to love mercy, had been taught by his priests, that to drink inflammatory liquors out of the skulls of those whom he had hated and murdered, was the great happiness which the gods permitted him to hope for; and had he been as anxious to please those gods as Oswald was to serve his, he would have poured out the blood of some of his unhappy subjects on their altars, as the most acceptable sacrifice he could offer.

Nor was the benefit of Oswald's example confined to his own kingdom and people. Going into Wessex, to conduct from thence the daughter of its king Cynegils, as his wife, he found there Byrinus, a newly arrived missionary, and co-operated with him so effectually, that Cynegils was induced to embrace Christianity. Oswald acted as the king's sponsor at the baptismal font; and, before his departure, had the satisfaction of seeing arrangements begun for communicating to the West Saxon nation the knowledge of a Saviour.

Whilst such were the projects which employed these sovereigns, who had, in sincerity, received that knowledge, the heathen king of Mercia continued the same unhappy ferocious wretch as both their fathers had been.

In the 9th year of Oswald's reign, having driven the Christian successor of Cynegils A.D. 642. out of Wessex, he turned his arms against Northumberland. Oswald was defeated, and slain in battle. But his last words were long after preserved, as a familiar saying in the mouths of the Northumbrians. "*Lord have mercy on the souls of my*

people," said Oswald, as he fell. These words are a pleasing evidence, that his soul was preserved, to the close of its earthly career, submissively confident in the goodness of God. Little did it matter to that spirit, when it had escaped to the happiness of heaven, that his unfeeling conqueror chose to display the degraded state of his own heart, by ordering Oswald's head and limbs to be severed from his lifeless trunk, and exposed on stakes.

Penda marched on to Bamborough; but, having collected wood and thatch from the desolated villages, to raise a fire, which might surmount the walls, and destroy the town with its inhabitants, a change of wind drove the flames back on the assailants. This circumstance very probably occasioned a superstitious panic in Penda's army; for they retreated before Oswy, the brother of Oswald, to carry destruction into the country of the East Angles.

There too Penda was suffered to be the scourge of a Christian people. Sigebert, king of East Anglia, with the help of a French prelate, had had his subjects instructed in Christianity; and had afterwards transferred his crown to Egeric, a relation, that he might worship God, undisturbed, in the privacy of a monastery. But the East Angles, terrified by the approach of Penda, besought him to quit his retirement and head the defending army. Sigebert yielded to their wishes; but, refusing again to handle the weapons of destruction, he appeared in the field with nothing more than a wand in his hand, to direct the operations of the army. Both he and Egeric fell by the swords of the victorious Mercians.

In the mean while Oswy had succeeded his brother Oswald as sovereign of Bernicia; but Deira was again separated from it, and governed by his kinsman Oswin.

Oswy,
Bretwalda
VII.

For six years the two princes lived on amicable terms. But Oswin, who is described as a sincere Christian, exhibiting the fruits of his religion in justice, generosity, and kindness, acquired so much popularity, as to excite the fears, and consequently the hatred of Oswy. When the latter prepared for invading Deira, Oswin shrunk A.D.
651. from the contest, and withdrew for concealment to the house of Hunwald, a person on whom he had bestowed possessions and rank. The ungrateful wretch guided the soldiers of Oswy, in the darkness of the night, to his house; and Oswin, though bravely defended by one faithful attendant, was quickly put to death. Regret for the death of the one, and the wickedness of the other of these northern princes, brought bishop Aidan, their common pastor, to the grave, within a fortnight after the murder of Oswin.

The restless Penda again threatened Northumberland; but Oswy warded off his at- A.D.
652. tack by numerous presents, and by consenting to a family alliance. Alchfrid, the son of the Northumbrian, married a daughter of the Mercian king; whilst Peada, the son of the latter, betrothed Alchfleda, the daughter of Oswy, who, like her father, though a Christian in name, had unhappily not learnt to keep her passions under subjection to the commands of religion. In Alchfrid, however, Peada found a brother-in-law, whose enlightened zeal won him over to the like sincere faith. By his advice the Mercian prince carried from Northumberland four Christian priests, who might instruct the inhabitants of that part of Penda's territories, which he was already allowed to govern.

Oswy himself, probably, considered the propagation of Christianity as a political means of forming a coalition to restrain the violence of that fierce heathen Penda; and, however ignorant he might be of the spirit of the Gospel, he could at least

ridicule the miserable follies of idolatry. By remarks of this kind, the Bretwalda persuaded the king of Essex to abjure idolatry, and to take
 A.D. 653. with him Cedda, a Scottish missionary; by whose preaching Christianity was restored in London, of which the king made him bishop.

Penda, at the age of 80, now again attacked the kingdom of Northumberland; being determined, as he said, to listen no longer to civil messages, nor even to offers of submission, but to exterminate the people. The measure of his iniquities, however, was now full; and he perished in a battle,
 A.D. 654. fought with the Northumbrians, near Leeds.

So many of the Mercian soldiers were slain at the same time, or drowned in attempting to cross the swollen river Aire; that Oswy, advancing into Mercia, conquered the whole of that kingdom, except the portion governed by his son-in-law, Peada; which, on that account, was spared for the present. But within a few months Peada perished by domestic treachery, generally attributed to his wife; and Oswy took advantage of it, to complete the subjugation of Mercia.

The king of Northumberland was now at the height of worldly prosperity. He was sovereign of the greatest part of England; and several British, Scottish, and Pictish princes, purchased his forbearance by annual tributes. In his character there is nothing to make us suppose that his elevation was a mark of Heaven's favour; but we can see that he was the most advantageous instrument, for bringing about a more extensive exceptance of Christianity, that could have been selected amongst the Saxon sovereigns. For the doctrines of the Clergy least connected with Rome; were the least adulterated; and the missionaries whom Oswy's influence caused to be received, from the Forth to the Thames, were from the schools of Ireland and Iona.

The king himself believed enough to make him

fear the punishment of the guilt which pressed upon his conscience. Now they who fear God's just anger, but are unwilling to submit their whole hearts to His guidance, are generally driven by their fears to aim at propitiating Him, without meaning to obey Him. The case is so common that one of the first perversions of religion is always in favour of this scheme. Such false hopes of working out his own atonement, whilst he kept his sins, had had their share with Oswy's political views, in making him desirous to spread the knowledge of God's name among the heathen. They also induced him to enrich and found monasteries. One he built on the very spot where Oswin was slain; and made it a condition of his bounty, that the monks should offer daily prayers for the souls of Oswin and himself. Thus, he who *killed, built the sepulchre; bearing witness* unto his own guilt, in the murder.

It is to be feared that his clergy were not sufficiently enlightened, or not sufficiently faithful to tell him, that as to Oswin's soul, it must *receive for the things done in his body, according to that he had done, whether good or bad*; and that for himself, these things could profit him nothing, unless by his own prayers and earnest repentance he could obtain, through his Saviour's mediation, to have the heart which had sanctioned the murder wholly changed.

A debate respecting the formalities of religion, which took place towards the close of Oswy's reign, will at once display his want of vital Christianity, and ignorance of its nature, and the manner in which the English Church was ensnared into a closer union with that of Rome.

It has been already observed, that the Christian church was not of one mind as to the proper day for celebrating Easter. This disturbed the order of Oswy's family; for his wife having been brought up in Kent, and he in Scotland, each thought right

to keep the festival on the day of which their different instructors approved. But there was another question to which the clergy attached great importance. It had become a rule, that persons in holy orders should distinguish themselves from laymen, by having part of their head shaven; and as the customs of the ancient British, and of the Romish churches were of different dates, their clergy, in this trifling matter, followed different patterns.

By this time the whole of Britain, except the small kingdom of Sussex, had received the Christian religion. And in every part of Christian Britain, except Kent, the teachers were either native Britons or Scots; or Christianity had been established through the influence of their disciples, the Northumbrian kings.

If, therefore, it was thought necessary, that the national church should tie down its members to uniformity, in such unedifying particularities as that respecting the shape of the clerical tonsure, the Romish clergy, being so much the fewer, should in decency have given way. But Wilfrid, a Northumbrian who had visited Italy, and had been afterwards tutor to prince Alchfrid, began now to display his ambitious and meddling character. In his travels he had seen the continental clergy already possessed of much more authority in the political world than was assumed by the Scottish missionaries; and he had sufficient shrewdness to perceive, that, by declaring themselves obliged to conform in all things to the decisions of the Romish church, the priesthood in reality shook off the more irksome controul of their national governments; for *no man can serve two masters*. At a conference, therefore, between the native clergy, and some zealous friends of the Romish church, Wilfrid dwelt upon 'the decrees of the Apostolic see,' as he called it; and triumphantly asked, how any authority could be preferred

A.D.
664.

before that of St. Peter, to whom the Lord had said, *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven**?

On hearing this Oswy asked the Scottish bishop, whether the Lord had really spoken thus to Peter: Certainly, he replied. Have you then, said he, any thing to bring forward, in proof of the like power having been conferred on Columb, the founder of your Church? No. Then do both parties, asked the king, agree that the Lord gave to Peter the keys of Heaven? Yes, was the reply. If so, rejoined Oswy, since he is the porter of the gates of heaven, I will obey him to the utmost of my power; least, when I come to the door, I find no one to open, if he who holds the keys be against me.

Whoever he be, who has power to admit or to keep out of heaven, common sense might dictate, to all who know it, a determination like Oswy's; So to seek to obey him as to be ready to do every thing which he may possibly have required. Yet, though this would evidently be reasonable, how few make such a resolution to obey Christ; of whom they know, on undeniable grounds, that the eternal abode of every soul, in happiness or misery, will be decided by His sentence! But, indeed, the obedience of which Oswy spoke so resolutely, was only obedience in matters of form. Had he resolved to weigh all the Apostle's words, that he might know his wishes in every subject, he would have found nothing said about clerical tonsure; or the necessity of rejoicing over Christ's resurrection, on one day rather than another. But he would have found, that the Holy Ghost taught Peter to declare, that *there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ*†; and that, therefore, it is a direct contradiction, both of the Apostle and of the Holy Spirit, to propose ob-

* Matt. xvi. 19.

† Acts ii. 8. 10. 12.

taining admission into heaven, through interest with St. Peter, and not in the name of his Master, Christ, alone.

The majority of the assembled clergy were so ignorant as to believe with Oswy that Christ had resigned to Peter the office of judge of all men; and farther, that Peter had left some share of this peculiar authority, as a sort of legacy, to the bishops of Rome. The unhappy consequence of this ignorance was, that the national independence of the British church began, henceforward, to be sacrificed, throughout the territories of all the Saxon kings, to the daily growing claims of the Popes; and that the best of the Scottish clergy withdrew in disgust to their own country.

Events, which soon followed, rapidly accelerated the progress of the papal influence. Wilfred was nominated bishop of the Northumbrians, and went to France for consecration; whilst Oswy joined with the king of Kent in sending Wighard, who had been elected archbishop of Canterbury, to be consecrated at Rome, and to learn the pope's wishes respecting the English Church. In the mean time, a frightful pestilence broke out in England; which perhaps occasioned Wilfred's remaining abroad till Ceadd was made bishop in his stead. The same disorder, spreading on the continent, killed Wighard at Rome; and the Pope took

A.D. 668. advantage of his dying there, to select and consecrate, in his stead, an utter stranger to England; a Greek of Tarsus, named Theodore.

The following year Theodore landed in A.D. 669. England, and being acknowledged as archbishop without any opposition, began to exercise his jurisdiction over the whole country. Ceadd, at his bidding, was removed to Litchfield; and he established Wilfred at York, as the proper seat of the bishop of the Northumbrians.

CHAPTER III.

Increasing Corruption of the Church, and Conclusion of the Heptarchy.

ON the death of Oswy, no one of the reigning Saxon kings, appears to have been thought of sufficient importance to merit the title of Bretwalda. A.D. 670.

The want of abilities, or the political weakness of these petty sovereigns, naturally increased the influence of Archbishop Theodore, who was one of the ablest and most learned men of his day, and came amongst them as the representative of the most important personage in Europe; for so they considered the Bishop of Rome. Whilst the king of Kent had no authority beyond his county, he beheld, in Theodore, a person who could issue commands which were obeyed from the Frith of Forth to the English channel. To establish his power the more firmly, and accustom the clergy to its exercise, the archbishop summoned his brethren, from all parts of England, to meet him in council at Hertford, and other places; on which occasions, rules of discipline and articles of faith were proposed by him, and, with their consent, became laws of the church. He, farther, assumed the power of making and unmaking bishops by his own authority, and deposed three Saxon prelates. This encouraged Egfred, the son and successor of Oswy, to lay before him complaints against the pride and insolence of Wilfrid. For the Northumbrians, now, found the latter to be a bishop of a very different spirit from that of those meek Scottish pastors, whose guidance he had persuaded them to slight. Not content with a bishopric which stretched from Edinburgh to Northamptonshire, Wilfrid kept in

A.D. 673.

his own hands estates which had been bestowed on monasteries. Thus he raised an income which he spent in sumptuous living; being served on gold and silver plate, and attended by a numerous train of well dressed followers.

Now it had been agreed, at the council of Hertford, that the number of bishops should be increased as their flocks grew more numerous. Of this the archbishop took advantage to humble Wilfrid; observing that his diocese would afford ample employment for four bishops; and that three more might be well maintained, where one was overswollen. He accordingly struck off Lincolnshire, and two divisions of the kingdom of Northumberland from the see of York; and consecrated three prelates to take charge of these new bishoprics.

Had Theodore been led by proper motives to these decisive measures, he might have been considered as making a good use of the authority which he had assumed, without having any just claim to it. But long afterwards, when sickness and the thoughts of judgment to come, revealed to him the deceitfulness of his own heart, Theodore appears to have felt, and lamented, that pride and ambition had dictated his conduct on this occasion.

In the mean time, Wilfrid repaired to court; and boldly charging king Egfred and the archbishop with injustice and usurpation, he appealed from them to the pope. This only raised a scornful laugh among the bystanders, who thought he could not really mean to apply to a foreign bishop, however great a man that bishop might be, to undo what a council of English prelates had recommended, and their king had sanctioned.

The resolution of Wilfrid was neither to be shaken by ridicule, nor by the difficulties of such a journey in those barbarous times. He set off for Rome, attended by a number of monks, prepared to

share his fortunes; and finding a council collected there, on his arrival, under pope ^{A. D. 680.} Agatho, he presented his petition; beseeching redress for the injurious treatment which he declared himself to have received. The papal court was gratified by an appeal to its authority from so remote a quarter; and quickly sent him back provided with a decree, drawn up in the name of the pope and assembled prelates, and ordering that Wilfrid should be restored to his rights; and those bishops expelled, between whom his diocese had been shared.

It must have been evident to the pope, that if the Saxon kings submitted to such a decree, as binding upon them, a precedent would be thereby established for interfering, authoritatively, at any future time, between sovereigns and their clergy; and that, if his right to receive and decide upon appeals was allowed, they must concede to him the farther right of summoning the parties and witnesses concerned; for, otherwise, the justice desired could not be done. As yet, however, men's minds, in this country, were not prepared for submitting to such a claim of paramount authority, set up by a foreigner. So that when Wilfrid returned, and presented the pope's decree, Egfred, instead of restoring his bishopric, committed him to prison; and when, at the end of a year, he was prevailed on to set him at liberty, it was only on condition that he should immediately quit Northumberland.

The only Saxon kingdom which did not acknowledge Theodore's jurisdiction was Sussex; its inhabitants being as yet heathens. Thither Wilfrid chose to withdraw. His arrival was acceptable to Edilwalch, the chief of the county, who had recently received baptism by the persuasion of the king of Mercia. And he soon ingratiated himself with the people; for he found them suffering from famine, and taught them to catch the fish on their shores;

an art which Wilfrid's countrymen, the Northumbrians, had been early induced to cultivate, in consequence of the abundant herring shoals that visit the northern coasts. These circumstances con-

spired to give the exiled bishop such influence
A. D. 685. with the South Saxons, that they willingly

listened to his words, when he exhorted them to become Christians. The monks who attended Wilfrid in his banishment, assisted to teach the people; and he and they were for some years settled at Selsey, which king Edilwalch gave to him as the seat of a bishopric.

The land thus given was occupied by 87 families, including 250 adult male and female slaves, who were probably the descendants of the conquered Britons. To these Wilfrid gave their liberty, at the same time that he baptized them.

Thus did Christianity every where tend to improve the condition of the oppressed. Of its infinitely more valuable spiritual benefits, the bishop and his companions were not able to communicate much to their converts. Nor did the churches under Theodore receive purer food. The temporal arrangements, for the support of the clergy and the erection of places of worship, were put by his prudent management on a better and more secure footing than before. But he wasted his talents, and most unhappily misapplied his influence in giving order and effect to the system of penance; a contrivance by which the erring church robbed its Lord of the honour due to his *one sacrifice for sins*.

In the last charge He gave to his disciples*, Christ bade, that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name*. Now, in the tongue in which this Scripture was written, repentance means change of mind. Wherefore the Apostle describes those who have repented, by saying, that

* Luke xxiv. 47.

they have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*. He who is transformed by the renewing of his mind from the knowledge of evil, by acquiring which man fell, to the knowledge and love of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, is so far restored to the image of his Creator. With this change of mind Christ joined remission of sins. *The blood of Him, who offered himself without spot to God, purgeth the conscience* of the repentant from those evil works whose wages are death, *to serve the living God*†; and by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit he is, as it were, created anew in righteousness and true holiness.

But instead of this entire turning of the whole heart, from a state of disobedience to the love of God, the degenerate church of Rome had begun to view as repentance the mere wish to get rid of the dreaded consequences of some particular offence; of the one last committed; of that which the sinner was most ready to resign; of that which alarmed him most; or which gave most scandal to the community. And whereas a real change of mind would necessarily produce shame and sorrow for sin, the church attached infinitely more importance to these consequences of repentance, than to the thing itself; and required that they should be exhibited in wearing some peculiar dress, in fasting, and in submitting to public reproof from its ministers.

Make the tree good, and its fruit will be good; but such regulations had reference to the fruit alone. It was as if the husbandman, instead of cutting away the sour branches of a wild apple, to engraft and raise a valuable tree from its stock, should content himself with medicating the fruit of the wild apple with some artificial sweetness, and then expect that

* Col. iii. 10.

† Heb. ix. 14.

henceforward the evil tree would produce good and sweet fruit.

And if this substitution of a demand for the signs of repentance rather than for the thing signified, was foolish, and little calculated to promote the reformation of mankind, there was another part of the system, at this time matured, which was more peculiarly offensive to the honour of Christ. The church ventured to affix a compensatory price, in shape of a penalty, on each offence. A true penitent, in the spirit of Zaccheus, would be anxious to repay four-fold every injury done to man; but he would despair of being ever restored to communion with his God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity*, if it was first necessary that he should make due compensation to infinite justice for the sin of disobeying Him, whose majesty is infinite, and to whom the sinner's obligations were also infinite. Blessed be God, this satisfaction has been fully made once for all, in our stead and for our benefit, by the death and sufferings of His beloved Son. But the Romish clergy led men to believe, that compensation might be made to God for each particular offence, by voluntary submission to certain bodily pains or privations, proportioned to its supposed quality; and the priest, rashly putting himself between God and the offender, presumed to proclaim the terms of the bargain.

The observance of these terms was called doing penance; an expression which, at this day, is used by the members of the Romish church instead of repentance. As Greek was the native language of archbishop Theodore, it must have been very great prejudice, or an habitual preference of fallible interpreters to the inspired word of God, that could make him overlook the very different meaning which belonged to its original name.

So it was, however, that the archbishop became distinguished over Europe for drawing up and enforcing a carefully measured scale of penance to be imposed for every possible breach of the law of God, or rather of the regulations of the church. It was called Theodore's penitentiary, or, by a more presumptuous name, Rules for remedying sins. Such lists of offences, with the penalty thought sufficient to compensate for each, are still drawn up and circulated by the Romish priesthood. They have from the first deserved rather to be called, Suggestions for teaching the wicked more sins. For, in order that every case may be comprehended, such perverse industry and ingenuity have been employed in collecting or supposing a variety of offences, that they describe more ways of wickedness than the heart of any one ordinary sinner could devise.

The penance imposed on our Saxon ancestors was, sometimes, the infliction on themselves, by their own hands, of a certain number of blows; or submitting to receive them from a priest. But the offender had permission to commute these for the repetition of prayers, or the chaunting of a number of psalms; prayer and psalmody being considered as punishments, instead of being viewed as the highest and most glorious privileges conceded to sinful man in this life; by which he is permitted to commune with the *High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity*.

In some rare cases the offender was enjoined to confine himself, for a day or two, to bread and water. But, generally, by penance was meant abstinence from wine, mead, and flesh for certain hours of the day, or certain days of the week during the period prescribed; with a requisition to keep from drunkenness, and eating to overload the stomach on the other days; as if this last was not always required from Christians.

The confusion between offences of very different importance, which occurs in the penitential rules, must have had a very mischievous tendency. For example, if a person entering on holy orders was given to hunting, he must submit to a year's penance; but if he should rise up against a man with the intention of killing him, his penance was to continue only seven months. If a layman committed the last mentioned offence, his penance continued but a fortnight; whilst, if he gave a person any thing to drink, out of a vessel in which a mouse or rat had been drowned, he must do penance for four days. What shall we say of this comparative leniency towards offences of violence? Was it mere moral blindness in the composers of these rules? Was it not rather dictated by their wish to effect an artful compromise with the besetting sins of a nation, so lately wholly bent on violence and slaughter, and not likely to submit to the due correction of their most frequent and habitual offences?

As ages pass on under our view, we shall have to notice still farther abuses, resulting from the establishment of penance as a part of religion.

The number of independent kingdoms, into which England was at this time divided, had not unfrequently the effect of impressing on their inhabitants a more valuable lesson than most of their clergy were capable of teaching. For amongst the different cotemporary sovereigns, the value of the restraints of religion, over persons who would yield to no other authority, was easily seen in the different conduct of those kings, who were really guided by Christian principles, and of such as had only adopted the Christian name.

Of the latter stamp was Ceadwalla, who being driven out of his native kingdom of Wessex, obtained help in money and horses from bishop Wilfrid, at Sel-
 Ceadwalla, king of Wessex.
 ; which he immediately employed to destroy that

bishop's benefactor Edilwalch, and to desolate Sussex. He next ravaged Kent; and then having recovered his rights in Wessex, and being acknowledged as its king, he turned his arms against the Isle of Wight; whose inhabitants he proposed to exterminate. As, however, he had vowed, that if victorious he would devote a fourth part of the island to the use of the Church, Wilfrid, who was to reap the advantage of this vow, persuaded him to desist from such an unprofitable act of cruelty. The bishop's guilt is evident, from his still continuing on a friendly footing with the murderer of Edilwalch. From him Ceadwalla had learned to think that Christianity was a system of forms; and that the Pope could unbolt the gates of Heaven for the most atrocious offenders. Stained and satiated with blood, he set off, therefore, for Rome; expiating his sins, as he vainly imagined, on his way, by bestowing the accumulated produce of his extensive and merciless robberies to decorate the shrines of saints. He had hitherto deferred his baptism; probably, that he might have a greater list of sins included in the benefit of forgiveness, which he expected to secure by the mere act of submission to that solemn rite. And the Pope was not ashamed to baptize him, without any plausible ground for hoping that he could bring to his baptism the *answer of a good conscience towards God*. But in the midst of this lamentable prostitution of the means of grace, offered to those who truly repent them of their sins, Ceadwalla was suddenly cut off by death.

A.D.
686.A.D.
688.

The happier inhabitants of Northumberland were, at this time, living under a king of very different character. Egfrid had perished in battle; and Aldfrid his brother, who, since their father Oswy's death, had led a studious and retired life in the island of Iona, amongst the pious Scottish clergy,

Aldfrid, king
of Northum-
berland, . .
A.D. 685.

was now called to take possession of the Northumbrian kingdom. The title of 'most learned in the Scriptures' was given to him by his cotemporaries; and he showed forth the fruits of that best of knowledge, in making the peace of his kingdom, and the instruction of his people, the main objects of all his earthly pursuits.

Benedict Biscop, a monk, brought up in Oswy's household, was encouraged by Aldfrid, as he had been by his predecessor, to collect books in France and Italy, for the use of the monasteries which he founded at Jarrow and Wearmouth. With the books he brought, also, the arts of the south. The abbey at Monks-Wearmouth was the first building, in this island, in which glass was used for windows. Whilst the library of Jarrow monastery supplied a Northumbrian youth, since known by the name of 'the venerable Bede,' with such an ample store of knowledge, as made him the most learned man of his time. The books, he there studied, contained the concentrated wisdom of ages; yet many of them were such as would train his mind to credulity, and the conversation he daily heard, from his less enlightened cotemporaries, fed that credulity with superstitious tales. Hence Bede's own works contain an abundant mixture of the latter, with information which excites wonder even at this day.

But Bede was far happier than if he had merely been the most learned of men, for in all his studies he sought the honour of God. And though lamentably deceived by the mistakes, or misrepresentations of those whom, in true humility and meekness, he thought capable of instructing him, yet the prayers which he ever mingled with his studies were heard, and he was taught that *love*, which *faileth not*, when *knowledge shall vanish away*. As a memorial of the venerable Northumbrian, let the following concise description of the four differences, under one of which all must be ranked,

be remembered by the reader ; and let him turn his thoughts inward, and consider, if he does not yet know, to which class he himself belongs. It is in a comment on Romans vii. that Bede, speaking of the conflict which the Christian has to sustain against the corruption of his nature, observes, ' There are those who fight not at all, and are drawn away by their lusts. Others who fight, indeed, but are overcome ; because they fight without faith, and in their own strength. Others who fight, and are still in the field, not overcome ; which was the case of St. Paul, and is that of all true Christians in this world. And, lastly, others who have overcome, and are at rest above.'

Having laboured to the close of a long life, to provide instruction for the most ignorant of his countrymen, as well as for those more capable of honouring his learning ; and having given his useful advice to the great and powerful, with the same fidelity as to the pupils who surrounded and loved him, Bede was finally enabled to depart for the 'rest above,' with the happy feelings which some of his last words express—' If my Maker please, I will go to Him from the flesh, who, when as yet I was not, formed me out of nothing. My soul desires to see Christ, my king, in his beauty.'

By God's blessing on the wisdom of Aldfrid's counsels, the Northumbrians dwelt in peace for nineteen years ; a longer abstinence from the cruelties and peculiar wretchedness of savage warfare, than their ancestors had, probably, ever experienced since they became a people. The ambition of Wilfrid alone partially interrupted the tranquillity of his native country. He had repaired to Aldfrid soon after his accession, with a letter in his favour from the dying Theodore ; and as he seemed disposed to acquiesce in the wise arrangement by which his former diocese had been subdivided into three, the

king, with the advice of his clergy, restored to him the diminished bishopric of York. But the unhappy man seems, by this time, to have been wholly given up to the ill suggestions of his worldly spirit. He could not remain satisfied with either the power, or the revenues now attached to his bishopric. He employed himself in a constant struggle to elude the authority by which his jurisdiction had been diminished; and, resuming his former practices, got into his own hands the controul over the estates of no less than twelve monasteries. At length he was summoned before a council, convoked by Aldfrid and archbishop Berthwald; and was asked, whether he would, or would not, obey the decrees of the English Church, made in Theodore's time. Very willingly, replied Wilfrid, as far as they are consistent with the rules of the Romish Church. This evasive answer convinced Aldfrid that there was nothing to be hoped from him; yet the clergy present, gathering round their ambitious colleague, besought him to deserve the character of a true friend of the church, by resigning what he affected to be unable conscientiously to hold under the required restrictions. But ambition gives its wretched slaves no rest; and Wilfrid, old as he now was, preferred undertaking another journey to Rome.

A.D. 701. Thither he was followed by messengers from Berthwald, who were authorized to state the archbishop's just complaints against him for insubordination. Wilfrid, however, had enough of the wisdom of the children of this world, to know how to secure the Pope's support. He, who had withstood his excellent king, and all the lawful authorities of his native country, with the haughtiest obstinacy, addressed the Pope with a petition, which began thus: 'The suppliant bishop Wilfrid, the humble slave of the servants of God, to the most blessed lord, the universal Pope.' Seduced by this

servile flattery, the Pope cast the bearers of Berthwald's message into prison, and added the insolence of a threatening letter to the king.

When Wilfrid's messengers conveyed this news to Aldfrid, they might reasonably have feared, that he would retaliate the ill usage shewn to the English envoys at Rome. But he told them, with becoming dignity, 'that beholding in them persons of respectable appearance, he should pay them the honour evidently due to their age; but that, let the Pope's commands be what they might, it was quite unreasonable to expect him to hold any communication, of a spiritual nature, with a person who had been twice condemned by councils composed of the clergy, not of his own dominions only, but of all England.'

Soon after this Aldfrid died; and Romish writers have represented this good king as tormented in his last moments with remorse, for having dared to dispute the Pope's orders; whilst they have called Wilfrid a saint, by which they mean, one whose very bones are worthy of a kind of worship; though the great wealth of which Wilfrid was possessed at his death, would alone have proved, that Mammon was the god he served to the last.

Were we to follow the details of the Northumbrian history after Aldfrid's death, we should find its pages almost entirely occupied with a disgraceful and melancholy record of crime; and of its sure consequence, suffering. He who had rewarded Aldfrid's piety, by saying to the waves of passion—'Peace! be still,' during his highly favoured reign, would no longer force men to be happy. Ambition and violence displayed themselves among the nobles and princes of the land in their natural hideous forms; yet they loved iniquity too much to turn from their sins. Within little more than a century fourteen kings had worn the crown of Northumberland; and but one of them had died in peaceable

possession of it. As for the chieftains who shared in the treachery and murder which accompanied each revolution, they who had been on the successful side in one, would generally receive their punishment from those whom revenge, or ambition, instigated to the next. But there can be no doubt that God had still some faithful servants left, over whom He would watch with an eye of mercy; and to whom the surrounding calamities would prove a blessing; by leading them to place all their affections and hopes unreservedly and implicitly on Him.

The kingdom of Wessex now began to rise rapidly in importance. Ceadwalla's successor, Ina, king of Wessex. Ina, was an ambitious prince. He drew A.D. 689. treasure from Kent, and extended his territories towards the west, by his victories over the British king of Cornwall; whilst he kept permanent possession of Sussex. His power was the natural result of his people's confidence; which he gained in the early part of his reign, by calling together his bishops, aldermen*, wise men, and clergy, and giving to his subjects a code of laws, formed by their advice.

Besides regulations for the prevention of injustice, fraud, or violence, the usual objects of every law-giver's care, these laws prescribed to the clergy the conduct proper to their calling; and ordered, that every man should pay a land and hearth tax, called Church-scot, for the support of public worship. The beneficial influence of Christian principles is very pleasingly exhibited, in a law which provides for the protection of foreigners, and of the conquered Britons; and in another, which enacts, that if a master compel his slave to labour on the sabbath, he shall forfeit his right over him, and the slave shall be thenceforward free. Ina also distinguished

* An alderman was the governor of a shire; and stood next rank to the king's son.

himself by his public buildings. He erected a castle at Taunton; and the abbey of Glastonbury having been destroyed, he restored it on a more expensive scale.

As he advanced in life, religion occupied much of Ina's thoughts. Its influence was assisted by his queen Ethelburga; who had been persuaded to believe, that a monastery was the only sure door to Heaven. It so happened, that the king had given a sumptuous entertainment to his nobles and clergy, as he was on the eve of quitting one of his residences. The next day, after a journey of a few hours, the queen invented a pretext for requesting him to return back with her to the place they had left. The few decorations of a Saxon king's palace would, in all probability, be removed in cars with his attendants from one castle to another, as he changed his place of abode; and Ethelburga had, besides, privately given directions for preparing the picture, which met the king's eye, when they reached the scene of his recent festivities. Instead of cheerful sounds, and marks of royal state, all was silence and desolation. The hall was strewed with rubbish, and fragments of broken meat; and a litter of swine had taken possession of the very bed in which he had passed the night. 'Where,' said the queen to her husband, 'are the mirth and the flattery of yesterday? Are they not passed by, like the wind? In the loathsome remains of yesterday's feast, we may perceive what our pampered bodies will soon become. Let this sight teach us to direct our pursuits to objects more suitable to the condition to which we are rapidly approaching.'

The *things which are seen*, and are suited to gratify our senses, will take a much stronger hold of the thoughts and affections of the wisest man, than they would if he could indeed form a just notion of their nothingness, as compared with the hopes or fears of the eternal world. No lesson, therefore, is

without its value, if it be well suited to impress the mind with a thorough conviction of the emptiness of all those objects, for which worldly men labour and strive. But when Ina, at his queen's suggestion, reflected on the vanity of those rewards, for which the ambitious long to be loaded with the toils of government, his reflections should not have led him to think of throwing off his duties, as an ill paid task; but rather to do them, henceforward, *as to the Lord and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord*; whose rewards are *good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over*;

real in their value, and lasting for ever. In-
 A.D. 728. stead of this, Ina called together his Witenagemot*, and releasing his subjects from their allegiance, resigned his crown.

As he had no sons, Wessex immediately became the scene of a civil war, between two competitors for the succession to Ina's throne. In this state he left the country, whose peace he was bound to preserve, to go to Rome, and close his days there, as a pilgrim, at the tombs of the apostles, Peter and Paul. To complete his voluntary humiliation, on his arrival at Rome, he refused to be shaven; adjudged himself unworthy to assume the dress of a monk; and earned his bread by the labour of his own hands, till after a few months he died; his life being probably shortened by such an extraordinary change of all his previous habits. It is evident that the wish to serve God in an acceptable manner must have taken a very strong hold of his heart. How much, therefore, is he to be pitied, in having met with no more enlightened advisers. Yet he, who knew the language of Rome, had the Scriptures open to him; and if he had paid due honour to the

* The same kind of parliament as he consulted respecting his laws. The word means literally a meeting of the wise.

word of God by a careful study of them, he would have learned not to *let any man beguile him of his reward, in a voluntary humility, or the worshipping of angels*; still less by calling upon dead men for help; and that there was but a vain *shew of wisdom in such will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body* *. But they who chose to listen to the Romish priests, instead of devoutly reading the Scriptures, were given up to believe a number of falsehoods; and the assertion that the tombs, shewn to pilgrims, were those of St. Peter and St. Paul was not the least of the sinful deceptions now encouraged by the Popes, *for lucre's sake*.

When Ina resigned his crown, Ethel- Ethelbald, bald, sovereign of Mercia, was the most ^{king of} powerful of the Saxon kings. In his youth ^{Mercia.} Ethelbald had been obliged to hide himself from the jealousy of Ceolred, his predecessor, in the marshes of Lincolnshire; where he afterwards erected the monastery of Croyland, in honour of Guthlac, the good man in whose hermitage he had lived concealed. Ceolred was a wretched drunkard, whose excesses early terminated in insanity ^{A.D. 716.} and death. On which event Ethelbald, whom Ceolred had persecuted, through fear of being himself dethroned to make way for him, was acknowledged by the Mercians as their king. His subjects were the happier for the instructions which he had received in his adversity from Guthlac; inasmuch as he was disposed to practise all those duties which required no sacrifice of his favourite inclination. Thus he was ready to protect the poor and the widow from oppressors; and put down, with a strong hand, all offences tending to disturb his subjects in the peaceable enjoyment of their property. Nor was he reluctant to giving alms out of his abundance. These things gained for him the affection of

* Col. ii. 18. 22.

his people; and they, in return, willingly served his ambition; till from the Humber to the Channel all obeyed his commands, either as subjects, or as submissive allies.

But though Ethelbald had enough of worldly wisdom to see the policy of ruling with justice, and of buying by his liberality the willing obedience of his subjects; and though he felt, perhaps, that sort of fear of God which is sufficient to turn men from the evil they have no great desire to commit; yet his heart was very far from being sincerely bent to obey his Maker. He indulged in odious sins, being an habitual adulterer; and a seducer of nuns; young women who had by a superstitious, yet solemn vow, peculiarly devoted their persons to the service and honour of God.

The report of his wickedness reached the ears of Boniface, a pious English missionary, by whose zealous labours the Gospel was, at this time, made known to the barbarous inhabitants of Germany. Having established a Church at Mayence, on the Rhine, the Pope had given him the title of Archbishop; and he was now actively employed in superintending the farther progress of Christianity in those parts, with the help of several fellow countrymen, who had left England on his invitation to join in the same good work. But his devotion to the cause of religion abroad, did not make him less desirous of, nor inactive in, promoting its advancement in his native country.

A.D. 745. Writing in his own name, and that of his fellow labourers, to a priest who had access to Ethelbald, Boniface says, 'Having been born and bred in England, we cannot but rejoice when we hear any good of its inhabitants; while we mourn and lament if we hear them reproached, or are told of their sins.' 'We have heard,' he says, 'that, having the fear of God, you fear not, the person of man; and that this king

sometimes deigns to listen to your advice; for which reasons we beg you to read to him the accompanying letter, and to add thereunto your own persuasions.'

The letter to Ethelbald, sent with the above, was drawn up with great address; and was at once respectful, explicit, and urgent. The king is first told of the sincere pleasure which the writers received from hearing of the good he did, and of his prosperity. They next mention the evil reports which had reached them respecting other parts of his conduct; and how reluctant they felt to giving them any credit. If it be so, we beg you, they say, dearest son, to consider how great is this sin in the eyes of Him whose judgment will abide for ever. They then set forth the nature of his sin in most faithful colours; and affectionately conjure him to think how unfit it is 'that you, whom not your own merits, but the abundant goodness of God hath made to be a king and ruler over many, should, through self-indulgence, devote yourself to obey an evil spirit; for the Scripture saith, *Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin*. It is full time that you should spare the multitude of perishing people, who, following the example of their prince's sins, are falling into the pit of death; for, doubtless, as many as by our good example we draw to a heavenly life, or by our ill example we precede in the way that leadeth to destruction, for all these we shall receive a suitable reward from our eternal judge.'

With the like zeal, and the same constant affection for every thing connected with the welfare of England, Boniface wrote to Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, exhorting and encouraging him to a faithful discharge of the duties of his high office. We must live, says he, dearest brother, so as to be patterns to the faithful; that our words may not be rendered vain by such actions as would contradict

them. But let us not think this enough ; if he to whom the dispensation of the word is committed, were to live a holy life, and yet suffered himself to be prevented by shame or fear, from warning those, who are going on like lost beings, he would perish with those who are ruined by his silence. What would it profit him, that he had no personal sins to answer, if he could not refuse to bear the punishment deserved by another's sins ? Remember the awful threats of the Lord against silent pastors, in his words to the prophet Ezekiel : *When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die ; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life ; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thine hand* *.

Farther on, he informs the archbishop of a most deplorable evil, which Boniface's residence abroad had forced upon his notice ; and he advises Cuthbert to press the bishops and princes of England to unite in putting a stop to the frequent pilgrimages of their country-women to Rome. For few, says he, preserve their integrity ; and the unhappy consequence is, that there is now scarcely a city in Lombardy or France, in which, to the disgrace of your church, there is not an abandoned English-woman living in a state of prostitution.

Such already were the dreadful consequences of that false idea, which Ina's example had sanctioned and made fashionable, that God's blessing would rather attend those who idly wandered as pilgrims to the supposed tombs of martyrs, than the unaffected performance of those obvious duties, which belong to every one's peculiar calling and station in life.

In the same faithful manner, Boniface mentions what he has heard of the habit of drunkenness, as

* Ezekiel iii. 18.

extending even to the higher orders of the Saxon clergy. This is, says he, the crying sin of our country-men. None of the Christian nations of the continent are addicted to it. Let us do all we can to restrain such wickedness by ecclesiastical decrees, and by the authority of Scripture, which says, *Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink* *.

What effect this good archbishop's advice had on Ethelbald, is not certainly known. But he and his nobles soon after attended a council A.D. 747. of the clergy, whom Cuthbert summoned together, when several decrees were made, in conformity with Boniface's suggestions, for the improvement of Christian discipline †. Most of the canons of this council were worthy of the primitive times of the church. And whilst the happy effects of the Gospel are seen in the formation of such characters as Bede and Boniface, amongst the Saxons of England; when their brethren in Germany were still no better than wild and mischievous savages; it would be unreasonable to expect that the national tendency to drunkenness should be healed in such, as, becoming Christians only in name, sought not the offered aid of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify their hearts. In every people, and in every age, there have been far too many belonging to the list of those "who fight not at all, and are drawn away by their lusts;" and of such, as "fight without faith, in their own strength, and are therefore overcome."

Ten years after writing these letters, archbishop Boniface was removed from his labours; being murdered in the Netherlands, with fifty-A.D. 753. two of his clergy and converts, by a troop of

* Isaiah v. 22.

† A meeting of the monks and clergy, for the purpose of settling disputes about doctrines, and of laying down rules for the conduct of ecclesiastics, was called *A council*; and the decisions of a council were named *canons*, or *decrees*.

heathens, who resented their endeavours to overthrow idolatry. Thus was he added to the number of those *slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; to whom high honour is given in heaven* *. At the same distance of time,

A.D. 757. from the holding of the council, Ethelbald also fell by the sword; being slain by a rebel chief, who aspired to his throne.

The Mercian thanes, or nobles, on this occasion, espoused the cause of Offa, the lawful heir; who, by their help, quickly drove the traitor out of the country.

In king Offa we have a very striking example of the ill effects of that part of the religion of his day, which was not Christianity, but an unauthorized and most mistaken addition to it. He committed numberless crimes, some of them exceedingly atrocious ones, to gratify his ambition; but for every extraordinary act of wickedness he founded some new abbey; whilst for less offences he gave gifts to the church. And having thus, as he vainly supposed, made sufficient compensation, he ventured to repeat his violations of the law of God, whenever it stood in the way of his designs. It appears too plainly, from the praise bestowed upon this prince by monkish writers, that they would never have thought of pointing out to him, how much such presumptuous imaginations stand opposed to the Scriptures. Yet, in the fiftieth Psalm, the Spirit seems to set forth all the majesty of God, to terrify the impure sinner, who should dare to propose thus to bargain with the Holy One for impunity in wickedness. God is there represented, as calling on the heavens and the earth to bear witness to his righteousness; whilst He declares, that he wants no gifts from men; though He may condescend to accept them, when offered as marks of submission or thankfulness. And

* Rev. vi. 9. 11.

that as for those, who think He will connive at their sins for the sake of their oblations, they thereby shew themselves to be such as would willingly suffer the violation of justice for a bribe. But that He regards their sacrifices as an insulting intimation, that they think *Him altogether such an one as themselves*, and therefore presumptuously attempt to purchase the pardon, which His mercy would freely give to the sincerely penitent.

The first crimes of Offa were the ordinary sins which ambition suggests to statesmen; and of which the poor sinner is tempted, by the language of the world, to think, that their guilt is not great. He made war on each of his weaker neighbours in their turn; and the blood of thousands was shed, that this robber, on a large scale, might add to his possessions the counties of Kent, Essex, Middlesex, Oxford, Gloucester, Salop, and Nottingham.

When he had got possession of these he lusted for more; and being by this time given up to his own wicked imaginations, he devised a scheme for getting the kingdom of the East Angles into his grasp. Its sovereign, Ethelbert, was a peaceful prince, and afforded him no excuse for war. He therefore affected to admire Ethelbert's virtues; and encouraged him to visit Mercia, in the hopes of receiving the hand of his daughter Etheldreda, in marriage. His arrival was welcomed with every appearance of hospitality; and, in the evening, Ethelbert had retired to his chamber, when he was informed that Offa wished to speak with him more privately. He rose, and followed the messenger; but was beset in a dark passage by ruffians, and murdered. At the news of this his attendants mounted their horses and fled; and the terror which they carried with them into East Anglia, gave Offa an easy conquest over their country. By this means, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire, fell into his power.

A.D.
792.

In the vain hope of paying an acceptable price to heaven for this infamous murder, Offa gave large estates to the abbey at Verulam; henceforward called St. Alban's, because the monks pretended that they had found out the body of Alban, a Briton said to have suffered martyrdom there about 400 years before. The chroniclers of this monastery assert, that Offa even went to Rome, to solicit for it, from the pope, peculiar privileges. If there is any truth in their account of the proceedings of the papal court on this occasion, the pope, whom they call "infallible," was either grossly deceived, or he acted the part of *the priest who dealeth falsely*; regardless of God's threats against such, as professing to speak by His authority, say to sinners, *Peace, peace, when there is no peace* *. For they tell us, that the pope replied, "Son Offa, most Christian of kings, the purity of thy holy disposition is not unknown to us, though living so far apart."

But *the priests now bore rule by such means*; and they who should have been Christ's people loved to have it so. By their mutual consent, the holiness without which, they found, no man might hope to see God, was no longer construed as meaning the devotion of the heart to its Maker's will, but as rather implying very humble submission to the daily increasing encroachments of the ambitious Romish church. And the implicitness of Offa's compliance with the demands of the court of Rome, had been in exact proportion to the grossness of the sins which he had determined to commit. He had imposed on his dominions a tax, to be annually paid into the pope's treasury. He had also permitted two bishops, sent from Rome, to claim, henceforward, for the clergy, exemption from being summoned to answer any charges in any court but an ecclesiastical one. The avowed object of this claim

* Jer. v. 10.

was to make the clergy independent of the native sovereigns of their country. The next advanced a considerable step towards making all future kings dependant on them. For it was proposed to declare, that henceforward the assent of the wicked should not be allowed to prevail, in the appointing of kings; but that they should be elected by the priests and elders of the people.

Both these important claims were brought forward in a public council of the English church; and passed, with Offa's sanction, into decrees. The exclusion of the wicked, from a voice in the kings' appointment, would have proved to mean the exclusion of all such as the heads of the clergy chose to call so, that is, of all who would not vote with them. But this last encroachment was probably felt to be so glaring, and was likely to meet with so many obstacles in practice, that the politic managers of the papal influence thought best, in after times, to let this decree be forgotten.

And now Offa, doubtless, thought that his crimes had gained for him a name which the worldly would applaud in ages to come; as the man who had exalted his family, by acquiring for it an ample dominion; and had secured its stability with much prudence; having cast up an embankment, still called Offa's dyke, from the Wye to the Dee, to check the inroads of the Welch; having subdued, or broken the power of all the other Saxon kings of the Heptarchy; and having purchased the pope's blessing.

But the most hopeful projects of ambitious wickedness are vain, without the blessing of a greater than the pope. *Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be**. And never were these words much more conspicuously verified,

* Psalm xxxvii. 10.

than by the calamities which rapidly swept away the whole of Offa's family, and gave all his possessions to others.

Before two years had elapsed from his conquest of the East Angles, Offa had sunk into the grave. His wife, who had encouraged his ambition, perished miserably. Their only son survived but a few weeks; and then the kingdom of Mercia passed to a distant relation. But Offa's three daughters were betrothed to as many sovereigns. Etheldreda to the king of the East Angles; Elfleda to the king of Northumberland; and Eadburga to the king of Wessex. By these politic matches, Offa seemed to have so arranged his well concerted schemes, as to have included the whole of England in the royal fortunes, of which he would leave his children possessed. And did this fair prospect of greatness also melt away? Even so. Etheldreda's dream of happiness was miserably exchanged, as we have seen, by Offa's impatient rapacity, for a murdered husband, and the consciousness that her own father was the murderer. She fled from a home polluted by such guilt, to devote her life to God, in a cell at Croyland. Turning to Him in her affliction, she would assuredly find comfort; but her ambitious father would view it as a severe calamity, that the pride of his family should pine away the days of her beauty amidst the frightful marshes of Lincolnshire. Elfleda's husband, Ethelred of Northumberland, was one whose *feet* had been *swift to shed blood*; and his subjects, following his own bad example, rose and murdered him, about the time of Offa's death. Eadburga, the third daughter, had a somewhat longer period of prosperity, as queen to Brihtric, sovereign of Wessex. But her prosperity was unblest. She made daily advances in wickedness; and having poured some poison into a cup of wine intended for one of her husband's

favourite ministers, the king happened to share the draught with his friend, and both perished together. On this she fled, with such treasures A. D. 800. as she could seize, to France; hoping that Charlemagne, the celebrated French emperor, might be induced, by the riches she brought, still to desire an alliance, which had once been the subject of messages between him and her father. "Which would you prefer," said Charlemagne, "me, or my son?" "Your son; because he is the youngest;" was Eadburga's bold and uncivil reply. "Had you chosen me," answered the emperor, "I might have transferred you to my son; but, as your choice has been otherwise, you shall have neither." And accordingly he placed her in a monastery, that she might learn, in abstinence and retirement, to govern her passions. But there she indulged her depravity, and was turned out of the society. After this she sank deeper and deeper in misery and degradation; and was at length recognised, by English pilgrims, soliciting in rags for her daily bread, in the streets of the Italian city Pavia. There, and in that wretched condition, she is supposed to have perished.

When Ina so precipitately resigned the crown of Wessex, he left his former subjects exposed to the miseries of a civil war; by neglecting the duty of making proper arrangements for the peaceable accession of Ethelherd, whom he recommended them to accept as his successor. The farther consequence was, that the West Saxons were, for some time, too divided a people to struggle successfully against the encroachments of the ambitious sovereigns of Mercia. During the long Cynewulf king reign of Cynewulf, however, Wessex of Wessex; gradually increased its internal strength; from A. D. 752 to 784. but he perished in a disreputable broil. On his death, Brihtric and Egbert were candidates for the crown; which the thanes had assumed the

right of bestowing on any prince of the race of Cerdic.

Brihtric, king of Wessex ; Brihtric was elected ; and Egbert found it advisable to quit the dominions of his successful rival. The result was doubly advantageous to the latter's future reign. For the resources of Wessex were considerably improved under Brihtric's peaceful government of 16 years. Whilst Egbert gained wisdom from adversity ; and latterly, entering the service of Charlemagne, had the opportunity of observing the civil and military arrangements of a monarch, whose political wisdom was very superior to that of any sovereign of his age.

Egbert, king of Wessex ; On Brihtric's death, Egbert returned to his native country ; and was acknowledged by the West Saxons as their king. For nine years he governed Wessex in peace, without making any attempt to extend his dominions. This makes it reasonable to conclude, that the war in which he was immediately afterwards engaged with the Britons, was not undertaken by him in the mere wantonness of ambition. It terminated in his conquering Cornwall.

A.D. 813. At this time Kenwulf, the kinsman who succeeded Offa's son, governed Mercia. He had recourse, more than once, to arms, to keep Kent and East Anglia in the same dependance to which they were reduced by Offa ; but he had the prudence not to attempt assuming any authority over Wessex. At length he perished, in a battle against the East Angles ; who detested the Mercian government, as imposed upon them by Offa's treachery to their beloved young king, Ethelbert. Kenwulf's heir was a boy ; but he also left a marriageable daughter, Windreda. Tempted by ambition, she induced the child's governor to allure him into under pretence of shewing him a chace ;

and, there, to murder him. The sin was committed; but, though Windreda had thus consented to sell her soul, she did not gain, thereby, even that small portion of the world, which she hoped to get as its price. Ceolwulf, her uncle, became king of Mercia; but was soon deprived of the kingdom, by Beornwulf, a powerful noble, who usurped the crown.

The usurper found it a crown of thorns; for, not content with his ill acquired dominion, he had the folly to break in upon Egbert's peace. The king of Wessex met his assailants near Wilton, and gave them a decisive defeat; immediately after ^{A.D. 823.} which he sent his son Ethelwulf with an army into Kent, whose inhabitants gladly threw off the Mercian yoke, to become the subjects of Egbert. For his prudent reign of 23 years had made the wisdom of his government known and respected throughout England. The people of Essex followed the example of their Kentish neighbours. And Beornwulf, aware that the aversion of the East Angles of Norfolk and Suffolk could only be controuled by military power, hastened with an army to chastise the most forward of the enemies of Mercia; but he lost his life in the contest with ^{A.D. 825.} them. And his successor, Ludecan, soon shared the same fate.

Wiglaf, alderman of Worcestershire, now became king of Mercia; but Egbert was still at war with the Mercians; and as they had wasted their strength in their endeavour to keep the East Angles under subjection, Wiglaf was obliged to seek safety in flight, when the Wessexians entered his country. For three years he eluded their arms, by wandering in the forests and marshes. At Croyland he found shelter in the cell of Etheldreda, the broken-hearted daughter of Offa. Perhaps the sight of Wiglaf's wretched condition was mercifully intended to soothe her sorrows, by setting forcibly before her the vanity

of those worldly objects of ambition, for the loss of which she might yet be sometimes tempted to sigh. And when he spoke of three Mercian kings, his predecessors, cut off in so short a time by Ethelbert's injured subjects, and of Mercia ruined by the attempt to keep the fruits of his murder, she would surely bless God, that the personal affliction, which that crime brought upon her, had preserved her from partaking in *any wise of the accursed thing*; which had been a curse to her father's house; and had made the Mercians unable *to stand before their enemies*.

By her advice, and the interference of Siward, abbot of Croyland, Wiglaf and Egbert came to terms; the conqueror restoring to the king of Mercia his kingdom, on condition that he should pay an annual tribute, and acknowledge Egbert as his superior lord.

It is to be feared that prosperity now began to produce its corrupting effects on Egbert's mind. For, as no other motive is recorded, ambition cannot but be suspected of having led him on from his successes in Mercia, to the invasion of Northumberland; and when its chieftain had met him, and acknowledged his superiority without a contest, we find him marching to the attack of North
 A.D. 828. Wales; in which he pushed his conquests as far as Anglesea.

Egbert thus gained a paramount authority over the Angle and Saxon nations; and might justly be called the eighth Bretwalda. The kingdoms of Sussex, Kent, and Essex, were become subject to him; and the sovereigns of East Anglia, Mercia, and Northumberland, called him their lord. But, though the Heptarchy was thus in reality, and finally, dissolved, Egbert never assumed the title of king of England. He and his immediate successors were content to style themselves, like their predecessors, kings of the West Saxons.

The latter years of the Heptarchy had witnessed a still farther departure of the erring church from the word of God. About the time when the persecution against Christians ceased, and when more took the Christian name than were willing to attend to Christian instruction, some bishops had passages from Scripture history painted on the walls of their churches; by way of impressing on such persons some attention to facts, of which they had consented to profess their belief. Nearly a century later, a custom crept in of decorating the churches with pictures, or statues, of persons whose memory was peculiarly dear to the congregation; as having taught or suffered on the spot, or in that neighbourhood. After these had been honoured, it would, naturally, be thought just to pay no less respect to such as were venerated by all Christians in common; the martyrs of ecclesiastical history; the holy personages spoken of in Scripture; or, our Lord himself. But a people, whose national habits had so long been idolatrous, soon advanced from regarding with reverence, to worshipping the images of their spiritual benefactors.

This most unhappy abuse spread gradually, from the most ignorant nominal Christians, to those who should have been capable of teaching them, that *the Lord their God is a jealous God*, and will not suffer his honour to be given to others. Of these blind teachers the pope made himself the head. A letter of his was communicated to the French and Saxon kings, requiring them to believe, notwithstanding the opposition of certain gainsayers, that a species of worship might innocently, nay properly, be bestowed on pictures and images of saints. This happened in Offa's time; but that learned Englishman, Alcuin, had then influence enough, both with the Saxon clergy, and the French monarch, Charlemagne, to procure the drawing up of public docu-

ments, in which they declared their horror at its being proposed to pay any worship to images, in the face of the Almighty's often repeated threats against idolatry. But the decrees of councils, and the decisions of popes were, at this time, rapidly superseding, in vulgar estimation, the authority of the word of God. Hence Alcuin's arguments from Scripture were soon forgotten; and the popes succeeded in establishing image worship. Because men are naturally the slaves of their senses, or, in Scripture language, carnal; and, not having that faith which should be, to them, *the full evidence of things not seen*, they find it easier to address their prayers to some visible-object, than to believe that He who is invisible can hear them, though *He planted the ear*.

The inhabitants of Christian Europe, having thus lamentably departed from *the laws, which God had set before them*, were yet not left without very intelligible warning, that their conduct was offensive in His sight. For *He delivered them into the hands of spoilers, that spoiled them; and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about*. Such were the Saracens and Danes; the former the scourges of the Southern parts of Christendom, the latter of the North.

A.D. 832
and 835. It was near the close of Egbert's reign, that the Danes first appeared in considerable force on the English coasts. Their

ferocity made an impression of unusual terror on his subjects; but as he quickly drove the invaders back to their ships, his life terminated in tranquillity, and all worldly prosperity.

A.D.

836.

CHAPTER IV.

From the Death of Egbert to the Accession of Alfred.

THE fleets of pirates, whose depredations, and whose cruelties made them the scourge of England and France during the next two centuries, were manned by natives of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway; but, as the Danes formed the greater number of those who infested the British shores, the English called all these merciless invaders, indiscriminately, Danes.

The Northmen, to give them a more comprehensive name, inhabited a rocky coast, or half inundated marshes. From their infancy they were sailors; and, as neither the land nor the climate gave hopes of more than very scanty food, they were accustomed to seek, with indifference, for farther supplies from the dangerous fisheries of a stormy sea, or by piracy. That such a people should have the bravery which consists in utter carelessness of life, and the cruelty which altogether disregards the pain of another, was to be expected. But that human beings should learn to delight in witnessing the writhings of helpless infants under the agonies of torture, proves that man, left unassisted by grace, may be led away, by the evil passions within him, till his heart becomes that of a demon. When we see human nature thus frightfully degraded, and reflect what might have been our own condition, if placed from our births in a like corrupting situation, how forcibly do the Apostle's questions call on us, and still more on those whom divine mercy has enabled to shine as lights before their fellow men, for thankfulness and deep humility? *Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

These ferocious pirates would burn a house and its inhabitants together ; or, after having slain the parents, they would tear a child from its bleeding mother's breasts, to toss it on their pikes from one to another. And such horrors they would commit in the wantonness of their diabolical cruelty, on people whom neither previous warfare, nor hereditary feuds, had peculiarly tempted them to hate. The ravenous wild beast retires at times to his den, and gambols playfully with his young ; but these degraded beings made it their boast, that, preferring scenes of blood, they had never shared, nor desired, the comforts of a domestic hearth. A tranquil old age, and a peaceful death, which men so generally covet, were dreaded by them as an intolerable disgrace. Their delight was to roam the ocean, under chiefs whom they named sea-kings ; to land where they were least expected ; to murder those whom they might not chuse to carry off as slaves ; and to destroy with fire, what they cared not to take away as spoil.

Such were *the strangers, the terrible of the nations*, whom the Lord let loose to draw their swords against our fathers ; when, having received the commandment, that they should *not make to themselves any graven images, nor bow down to them, nor worship them*, they made the word of God of none effect through their tradition. The guilt of neglect and disobedience was become universal ; for *the teachers taught falsely, and the priests bore rule by their means, and the people loved to have it so*. And their punishment closely resembled what the prophet had, in a like case, denounced against the idolaters in the Jewish church ; saying, *Behold a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. They shall lay hold on bow and spear : they are cruel, and have no mercy.*

Yet in the midst of judgment the effect of God's

compassion was seen. He had prepared the means of saving the nation from relapsing altogether into barbarity and heathenism; by permitting so large a portion of the Saxon power to be concentrated in the hands of the kings of Wessex, just as the Danish invasions were commencing. The resistance which these kings were thus enabled to make against their savage invaders, prevented the Saxons from losing all the benefits of their past progress in civilisation, and all knowledge of the true God and of his Gospel; for, by the time that this resistance was overpowered, the Danes themselves were civilized in the same degree, and acknowledged the same creed.

Ethelwulf, the son and successor of Egbert, found it necessary to appoint officers as guardians of the coast; with authority to collect the inhabitants, and to oppose the landing or progress of enemies. Yet the shores of Hampshire, Dorset, and Lincolnshire, were invaded and pillaged, in the first three years of his reign. In the fourth the Danes landed and advanced so far, that three battles were fought in Kent, whilst Ethelwulf was defeated in person near Charmouth. After this, the pirates A.D.
839. for ten years abandoned the English coasts, for the more tempting spoils of France. But in 851 they wintered, in a powerful body, on the isle of Thanet; and then, ascending the Thames with 350 vessels, sacked Canterbury and London. On their farther progress, the Danes were vanquished in Surrey, with very great loss; and Ethelwulf's officers defeated others of the invaders in Devonshire, and off Sandwich. During the remainder of his reign they occasionally appeared again as robbers, but made no more attempts at conquest.

It is pleasing to find Ethelwulf earnestly bent on evincing his gratitude for past deliverance, and on securing the future protection of Heaven. Indeed his earliest choice of public ministers appears to have been guided by respect for religion. For he

selected, from the professed servants of God, the bishops of Sherbourne and Winchester, to be his chief counsellors of state. Had he been better acquainted with the simplest elements of religion, he would have known that they could not be faithful servants of two masters. And had they been accustomed to study those Scriptures, in which it was their peculiar duty to see that all should be well instructed who were willing to hear, they would have directed him to express his thankfulness, and to seek the favour of God by increased diligence in performing the duties of his appointed station; rather than by paying his clergy extravagantly for more of their prayers, and wandering himself on a pilgrimage to Rome. The mistaken manner in which Ethelwulf had been taught, by his spiritual guides, to think of the authority assumed by the pope over all Christian people, was conspicuous in his sending his youngest son, afterwards the celebrated Alfred, but then an infant of four years old, on the long and dangerous journey to Rome, to be anointed as a king by the pope. He seems to have considered this special anointing as a consecration of Alfred to the kingly office; sufficient to justify him in selecting his favourite child for his successor, to the exclusion of his elder brothers, and to secure the allegiance of his subjects to this son, against the ordinary claims of birthright.

With the like deference to priestly influence, Ethelwulf and several of his nobles gave a tenth of all their lands and property to the clergy; exempting their gift from all taxes. The tithe of the produce appears to have been conceded before; at some period not easy to ascertain. It is probable that the Romish clergy, who were, in all things, too much disposed to take to themselves the privileges allotted to the Jewish priests under a more exclusive dispensation, claimed the tithes of produce as given to the priesthood by the command of the Almighty;

and as needing no additional sanction from human legislators, to make its payment the duty of all who acknowledged the word of God to be the rule of their lives. But for this additional gift, of the tenth part of so many estates, the clergy stipulated that, every Wednesday, each monk and nun should sing fifty psalms; and every priest repeat certain forms, and say one mass for the king, and another for the contributing nobles; by way of pay for, and abatement of, the sins of their benefactors.

Men who could thus ignorantly speak of paying the price of each other's sins, by singing so many psalms, could never have weighed the words of those psalms which their lips vainly uttered. For in them it is said, *None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious**. And St. Peter, whose authority they thought themselves most earnest in setting up, had left it written for their instruction, that *the blood of Christ* was that *precious thing*†, by which alone the souls of men are redeemed. How dangerously low an estimate must the king have been taught to form of God's abhorrence of sin; when he was made to believe that the penalty, due for transgressions against His holy law, could be paid by the repetition of a task! And how low also must have been his estimate of the duties which men, *bought with such a price*, owe to their Redeemer; when he was persuaded that the priests could not only do enough to satisfy all the Lord's just demands of obedience, but might offer to God more abundant devotion than was needful; and could have the rest put to their benefactor's account.

Shortly after making this bargain with his own clergy, Ethelwulf set off on a pilgrimage to Italy; carrying with him far more magnifi-

A.D.
855.

* Psalm xlix. 7, 8.

† 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

cent presents for the pope and church at Rome, than his Saxon subjects could well afford to put at his disposal for distribution. To the pope alone, he gave a crown of pure gold, weighing four pounds; two golden vessels, and four of silver gilt; two golden images; and valuable dresses. He also made presents of gold and silver to the nobility, the chief clergy, and to sundry others; and he rebuilt a school, or hospital, which Ina had founded for the benefit of Saxon pilgrims.

He was, of course, very favourably received by the papal court; and being moved to compassion by the sight of a penitent galled with his chains, he asked and obtained an order, that no Englishman should be condemned to do penance in irons, out of his own country. The system of penance has been already explained. It involved the same error, and the same dishonour to the only Redeemer, as was so lately noticed. The self-convicted sinner was taught that, following the directions of his priests, he might do so much more than was required of him in the course of a certain number of years, or sometimes even in a few months, as to cancel the debt or penalty due for past offences; and those, perhaps, of the most atrocious description. And the good works which were to do so much more than man ever can do, towards satisfying divine justice, were generally neither instances of obedience to the first, nor to the second of the two great commandments. They were neither marks of love for God nor man. They consisted, for the most part, in self inflictions of various kinds of annoyance or pain; proving nothing more than that the sinner had such a terror of God's deserved anger, that he was willing to punish himself to a certain extent, provided he might thereby escape from the *fire that never shall be quenched*.

A modern historian, of the Romish church, wishing to explain how penitents happened to be sent out of their native country, gives his read-

ers an account of a person who had murdered his own parent with peculiar circumstances of cruelty, and was ordered by his bishop to wear an iron circle round his stomach, and iron rings upon each arm ; " that, tormenting himself for nine years, he might deserve, (or earn) his pardon." Thus was this atrocious parricide encouraged to consider himself as making all things even, in his account with that holy Judge, who had said, when He condescended to give one nation its laws, *he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death* *. And so far is this mistaken church, still, from having learned to correct its past errors, that the Romish divine, who quotes the story of this penance from an ancient monkish writer, appears to be quite unconscious, that whilst the just *wages* of this man's horrid *sin* were declared by God's special proclamation to be death, the deepest repentance and most thorough change of heart could do no more than prepare him to receive his pardon as *the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord* ; it is never to be spoken of, by those even who have lived the life nearest to uniform obedience, as earned or deserved.

Ethelwulf had taken his son Alfred with him, on this pilgrimage to Rome ; thus making the boy again traverse the continent, and visit its ancient capital. He was still a mere child, only seven years old ; but his father's anxiety to secure the succession to the kingdom in his hands, makes it probable that Alfred had very early manifested superior talents ; and there was much in Rome to make a strong impression on the mind of an intelligent boy. The most paltry town in England is not so much exceeded in architectural splendour by modern London, as Ethelwulf's capital was by the stupendous buildings which then gave majesty to Rome. For many of the most important edifices in England were, at

* Exod. xxi. 15.

that time, no more than thatched log houses; whilst the magnificent remains of ancient Roman grandeur, which still, after the lapse of another thousand years, astonish the enlightened traveller's eye, must have appeared, to a Saxon pilgrim, to surpass the work of man. The effect of this upon the ignorant wanderers of the north was, to make them consider the ancient Romans as enchanters; and to prepare them for receiving, with superstitious awe, every word or command of the papal court; as if the wisdom of the popes had either shared largely in producing these prodigies, or enabled them to reap the fruits of those mighty enchanters' toils. But when Alfred became a man, and applied his extended information, and stronger mind, to reflections on the picture which this stately city must have left on his memory, he gained a clearer view than could well have been given him in any other way, of the immense superiority of a well arranged government, conducted by persons of cultivated understandings, over the rude institutions and ignorant agents, who called into action the brute strength of his countrymen, almost without making any account of their minds.

As the royal party returned homewards, Ethelwulf married Judith, daughter of the French king.
 A. D. 866. Her age, under twelve years, made her more fit to be the playfellow of Alfred; and in time she became his useful instructress. It was three or four years after this, that she sat surrounded by the young Saxon princes, whilst they looked with her over the paintings which decorated a poem, written in their native tongue; and heard her explain their purport. Perceiving their attention caught, she said, This book shall be given to him, who will soonest learn to read it. The elder boys thought the prize not worth the trouble; but Alfred already felt a thirst for information, and asked, If she really intended what she had said. With a smile of ap-

probation she repeated her promise. He took the book, found out an instructor, and learned to read and to repeat it. After this he procured a collection of psalms and prayers ; which he carried about, as a treasure, for constant use.

Swithin, Bishop of Winchester, had been entrusted with the care of Alfred's education. As his seeking for courtly employments shews him to have been but a luke-warm servant of Christ ; of whose flock he was a pastor ; so the fact, that this intelligent and teachable youth had not learned to read sooner, proves the bishop to have equally neglected his duty to the king, who had made him his favourite son's preceptor. Yet this same Swithin obtained in Roman Catholic times the title of Saint ; not given scoffingly, but in unhappy ignorance of the nature of true holiness.

Ethelwulf found equal reason to lament having encouraged Alstan, bishop of Sherbourne, to add to the duties of his sacred office the employments of a leading minister of state. The bishop had thus put himself under the sentence of unfitness for the kingdom of God ; pronounced against him, who *having put his hand to Christ's plough, looketh back on the world*. Hence, when the temptations of ambition assailed him, they found him unprotected, and he fell into the depths of wickedness ; uniting to the ordinary guilt of rebellion, the basest ingratitude to his kind but indiscreet patron, and the odious crime of persuading a son to lift his hand against his father.

When the king arrived in England, he found his eldest son, Ethelbald, and the bishop of Sherbourne, at the head of a conspiracy, for depriving him of his crown. A civil war seemed about to desolate the country. But, on the one hand, the majority of the people refused to become the tools of these ungrateful conspirators ; and, on the other, the king, who seems to have been blessed with a truly

Christian disposition, when not misled by the ignorance of his spiritual guides, declined shedding his subjects' blood for the preservation of his rights. The two parties, therefore, came to a compromise. The old king resigned to Ethelbald, Wessex, and most of its dependencies; contenting himself with the reservation of the kingdoms of Kent and Essex.

A.D.
838. Two years after Ethelwulf died; and it is pleasing to know, that he had been enabled so far to subdue every vindictive feeling, that his will was found to contain a liberal bequest, from his personal property, to the son who had deprived him of the most important part of his domains.

The reign of Ethelbald produced no events deserving of notice. He survived his injured father but two years.

A.D.
860. Ethelbert, his brother, who had governed the provinces reserved by Ethelwulf from the time of the latter's death, now re-united them to Wessex; by succeeding to Ethelbald's throne.

In the course of his reign the Danes landed and ravaged Hampshire and Thanet.

Their appearance in Northumbria produced more important and lasting consequences.

Ragnar, a chieftain whose unshrinking cruelty and extensive robberies had made him popular in a nation of thieves and murderers, had led a fleet of pirates up the river Seine; and received five thousand pounds of silver, as the price for sparing Paris from utter destruction. Thus enriched he built two ships, of such a size as no sea-king had ever before aspired to possess. They were, perhaps, too unwieldy to be managed skilfully by men accustomed to work only smaller vessels; so Ragnar was wrecked on the coast of Northumberland. Thus thrown upon a foreign shore, he moved forward to plunder and destroy; too much blinded by his greediness for spoil to consider the consequence of irritating the whole country against his small and

unsupported force. He was seized by Ella, the chief of Deira, and put to death.

The news of his capture quickly reached his native land; with the exaggerated addition, that he had been thrown into a dungeon alive, to be devoured by venomous snakes. Reptiles large and powerful enough for such a purpose could not, as we well know, have been found in England. But the merciless pirates of the north were irritated to madness; by the report of cruelty more dreadful, to their imaginations, than their own; the sons of Ragnar were joined by eight sea-kings and twenty jarls *, in their determination to take a terrible revenge for his death.

When their attack burst upon England, Ethelbert was dead; and Ethelfred, the third A.D. 866.
of Ethelwulf's sons, had succeeded him.

The Danes effected their landing in East Anglia, and desired its king, Edmund, to supply them with horses; a command with which he did not dare to refuse compliance. In the following spring they marched through the heart of England, under the command of Inguar and Ubbo, sons of Ragnar; seized on York; and carried desolation to the banks of the Tyne. Returning south with their booty, they were fiercely attacked by the Northumbrians, who drove the invaders into York before them; but following them rashly into the narrow streets of that city, the Saxons were, in their turn, defeated, and slain in great numbers. Ella himself was taken alive, and tortured by the sons of Ragnar; in a manner too horrible to be described.

The loss of the Northumbrians had been so severe, that the Danes found themselves strong enough to keep permanent possession of Northumberland; but detached a part of their forces to Nottingham. They had so laid waste the northern counties, that

* From this barbarous title comes the modern one, Earl.

the inhabitants suffered the evils of famine; and their own army could scarcely have found sustenance, had it continued united.

A. D. 868. Ethelred and his brother Alfred, however, marched to the help of the king of Mercia, and the Danes agreed to retire from his territories.

The next year the famine became more severe, from the general interruption of agriculture; and want, and the unwholesome food which men were driven by the cravings of hunger to devour, produced a pestilence, which extended even to the cattle. And now the Danes moved south again, to find food and pillage in the less exhausted parts of the country.

An account of one campaign may give some notion of the misery which the wickedness of man is capable of inflicting wilfully upon his race.

Descending the Humber in their boats, the Danes landed on the Lincolnshire side, near its mouth. Fire and the sword spread desolation wherever they moved. They destroyed the rich monastery of Bardney, and murdered its peaceful inmates. Advancing to the southern extremity of the country, they lost three of the sea-kings, in a battle which the natives fought with the bravery of despair. But the Saxons were overwhelmed by numbers, and the defenders of their country fled, or were slaughtered in heaps.

A youth who had flung his arms into a neighbouring wood, and crossed the country in the night, brought intelligence of the Danish victory to the monastery of Croxland, whilst the abbot and his brethren were at matins. The dismal tidings struck terror into every breast. The abbot, however, made immediate preparations for sending off the most active monks with the highly prized relics, the jewels, and the charters of the monastery, to the woods of Thorney isle, in the midst of the fens. In

anxious haste they loaded a boat with these treasures; whilst they flung into the adjoining waters such bulky valuables as would sink, and might remain uninjured and concealed. But when they saw the table of the great altar, though plated with gold, rise and float on the surface, they superstitiously replaced it in the church; as a sacred thing, unwilling to have its honour hid, or polluted with mud.

The flames of the neighbouring villages now marked the approach of the Danes; and soon they heard the shouts of the fierce pagans. The children and the aged, who would have embarrassed the flight, or might have betrayed the concealment of the party entrusted with the objects of his veneration, now clung about the abbot. He, and the monks still with him, had put on their sacred vestments, and assembled in the church; with the faint hope, that, aided by the imposing effect of their decorous habits, and protected by the vicinity of their patron saint, they might induce the enemy to abstain from useless cruelty to harmless childhood and unresisting age.

A furious torrent of howling barbarians soon poured in, exulting to find Christian priests to massacre. Their chieftain hewed down the hoary abbot at the altar; and his companions quickly stained their battle-axes with the blood of the attendant clergy. The old men and children, who ran affrighted from the choir, were seized and tortured to discover the treasures of the monastery. Every part of this late peaceful abode was polluted with blood. One boy only, whose countenance interested in his favour Sidroe, a Danish leader, was permitted to survive; and lived to relate this melancholy tale. The spoilers broke open tombs in the hope of finding concealed wealth. Disappointed in this expectation, they set fire to the ransacked buildings, and departed, driving off before them large herds of

cattle, to commit the like atrocities at Medeshamsted, now called Peterborough.

Here too was a wealthy monastery, furnished with one of the most valuable libraries in England. The monks, with their tenants and neighbours, made a brave defence. But on the second assault Ubbo, irritated by seeing one of his brothers wounded with a stone, forced an entrance. Every person within was put to death; and Sidroc, who understood the demoniacal fury which had possession of his countryman's breast, cautioned the little boy to keep, that day, out of Ubbo's sight. The spoils here were very valuable; but the Northmen seem to have delighted in destruction, out of the unmixed love of its wickedness. The monastery and surrounding town were set on fire; and continued to burn for fifteen days.

The Danes now moved on towards Huntingdon. Sidroc was appointed to bring up the rear, and protect the cars laden with spoil. As his troops were passing the river Nen, two waggons, and the oxen that drew them, were upset into deep water; and whilst Sidroc's attendants were busied with endeavouring to recover the valuable property which had sunk, or floated down the stream, the Saxon boy escaped into a wood hard by.

All the next night he fled and ran; and in the morning he came in sight of the smoking ruins of Croyland. He found that the monks who had been concealed in Thorney, were now returned, and labouring to extinguish the still burning fires. When they heard the boy's account of the murder of their abbot and brethren, they wept aloud, and sought, amidst the fragments and smoking ashes of the church, for such of their bones as might be still unconsumed. From this toil they were called to go and bury the dead of Peterborough; whose exposed bodies the kites and the masterless dogs were tearing.

In the mean while the Danes proceeded through Cambridgeshire, into Norfolk; shedding blood like water on the ground, as they went. A battle was fought by the East Angles, to save their country from these horrors, but in vain. And Ingvar sent forward a Danish messenger to king Edmund, bidding him consent to divide his treasures with the Northmen; to give up the worship of Christ for their gods; and to hold his authority henceforward, as their dependent. The haughtiest threats were added, if he should refuse submission.

Edmund appears, like Ethelwulf, to have had a bishop for his counsellor in affairs of state. And, like that king, he found that one who was not duly faithful to his heavenly Lord, must not be expected to serve an earthly master better. When Ingvar's threatening message arrived, the bishop had not the courage to do his duty by either master. He wickedly, and foolishly, advised Edmund to comply, for the sake of securing such happiness as could be expected from reigning the tool of the Danes; after having disgraced himself in the sight of every honest man, and denied that God in whose strict justice he could not help believing. Edmund judged better. He replied to the Danish messenger, that he should neither give way to his master's threats, nor allow himself to be deceived by his promises. For that death had no terrors, for one who was more willing to quit this life, than to continue and witness his people's affliction; and that the offer to let him live and reign an idolater, was but, in his eyes, the offer of degradation and misery.

The sincerity of this language was soon put to the proof. The Danes rapidly advanced, and having made Edmund their prisoner, bound him with chains to a tree, and scourged him with stripes. He was then exposed as a mark for their arrows, till Ingvar, enraged at seeing him still collected and employed in prayer, struck off his head at a blow.

The united firmness and gentleness displayed by Edmund, under this trial, encourage the confident hope that his willingness to confess his Saviour, even unto death, was graciously accepted, and acknowledged, as it were, by the support which his spirit found in the last painful hour.

The 20th of November is still marked with Edmund's name in our calendar; and he has a just claim to such a mark of our respect, as a king and a martyr. After his death the sovereignty of East Angles was given by the Danes to Godrun, one of their sea-kings.

It may have been observed how large a share of the unhappiness, produced by the desolating march of these invaders, fell upon the monasteries. The most celebrated of them resembled those high places of the Israelites, in which, if the true God was acknowledged, his honour was given to *them that are no gods*. For almost every monastery had its peculiar patron saint, not to be looked up to with respect, as a fit example for imitation, but in whose name the worshippers trusted, that, though dead, he could still work miracles. And as it was said of idolatrous Judah, before the Chaldeans were sent to execute God's vengeance upon them, *According to the number of thy cities are thy gods*, so might it have been said, at this time, of unhappy England, *According to the number of thy monasteries are they to whom thou givest mine honour*. It was but twenty years before, that the monks of Croyland and their abbot had called upon a national council to bestow on their monastery peculiar privileges for the sake of one of its deceased members, whom they styled St. Guthlac; and who was represented, to the kings of Mercia and Wessex, as having wrought miracles enough to justify them in looking to his powerful intercession for the remission of their sins. Doubtless in the time of their trouble, the monks, like the Jews, would turn to the true God and cry, *Arise*

and save us. But they had no right then to expect any other answer, than the same as He made of old. *Where are thy gods, that thou hast made thee, which did eat of the fat of your sacrifices, and drank the wine of your drink offerings? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble. Wherefore will ye plead with me? Ye all have transgressed against me.*

One Saxon, indeed, the governor of Berkshire, is recorded as reminding his hastily raised levies that they had a Saviour; instead of bidding them ask their saints for help, "And what though the Danish army be larger than ours," said he, "Christ our general is stronger than them." That day he gained the victory.

There is no more generally acknowledged mark, that it is the Almighty's intention to leave a people to be the prey of their enemies, than the evident want of ordinary prudence in their chiefs. The Saxon kings had suffered the Danes to attack each of them in his turn; whereas they ought, at once, to have all united heartily, in driving these invaders and robbers out of the island. When the Northmen attacked the king of Wessex, there was, already, no other Saxon power left able to assist him. Ethelred and Alfred, however, in a battle which the former refused to commence till he had finished offering prayers in his tent, gave the Danes their severest defeat. But in another engagement, which quickly followed, the English lost the day; and Ethelred, receiving a mortal wound, left his successor a desolated kingdom and disheartened followers, wherewith to contend against a fierce, and now experienced, hostile army.

CHAPTER V.

The reign of Alfred.

A.D. 871. THE succession to the kingdom of Wessex still continued elective ; and, though Ethelred had left male children, the choice of the people, in this time of difficulty, naturally fell on Alfred. He was now, therefore, unanimously invited to ascend that throne on which his father, by a premature preference, had wished to have him placed.

But the offer of the crown was, at this juncture, so evidently little better than a request to stand foremost in a desperate struggle, that persuasion was necessary to induce Alfred to accept it. Any reasonable person, not quite blinded by ambition, would have felt reluctant to entering on the post of greatest danger, and of overwhelming toils, when the peaceable enjoyment of its honors was apparently hopeless. And there were peculiar reasons for Alfred's shrinking from the burdens of royalty.

He was lately married ; had a genuine relish for domestic happiness ; and might have bargained for personal security with the Danes, who respected his valour. He had also imbibed a taste for intellectual pleasures, far beyond his age and country ; which made it odious to him to quit the conversation of those wise men who, though dead, speak so sweetly in their writings, to listen to the rude talk, and deal with the coarse minds of a half savage soldiery, a grossly ignorant priesthood, and a drunken nobility. For such were the different classes of the Saxon nation become, since the corruption of religion. But, farther, Alfred had so sincere a dread of the evil of his own nature, that in early youth he had made it his frequent and earnest prayer, that it might please the LORD to weaken the temp-

tations which *war against the law of the mind*, by some visitation sufficient for its purpose, yet not such as to render him contemptible or useless to his fellow-creatures. He, who feared those assaults which happen to all, would feel a still greater terror at the prospect of exposure to those far more numerous and more dangerous trials which beset a king.

And, if these were strong reasons for preferring retirement and a private station, repose seemed indispensable, for Alfred, from the state of his health. His prayer had been heard; and a *thorn in the flesh* had broken the force of youthful passions. But, after this disorder had quitted him, a more painful affliction had fallen upon him; sent by that wise Father, who *chasteneth those whom he loveth with chastening*, which, though *grievous for the time, nevertheless afterward yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby*. Amidst the pomps and festivities which ushered in the day of his marriage, he was suddenly seized with terrible spasms; the result of some internal complaint, which never left him as long as he lived. So dreadful was the anguish which its attacks produced, that the composure of the short interval of a day, or sometimes of an hour only, was disturbed by the dread of the pain which was sure to accompany their recurrence.

But Alfred had learned to think, that he must answer for every neglected opportunity of serving either God, or his fellow-creatures. When, therefore, his countrymen had convinced him of the sincerity of their request, he did not hesitate long about surrendering his personal satisfactions and wishes, and resolving to encounter, whatever difficulties and dangers might await him, with a firm hope of the divine protection.

At his accession, Alfred was but in his twenty-second year. It was necessary that he should be

immediately in the field ; but he was defeated in an engagement in Wiltshire, and found it advisable soon after, to make certain concessions, to induce the Danes to grant him peace. The five following years were employed, by them, in the total subjugation of Bernicia and Mercia, whilst the exhausted state of Wessex obliged Alfred to allow his subjects repose, before he could make any considerable preparations to protect the country against their return. At length he found means to equip and man a few ships; as a step towards cutting off the fresh supplies of hungry robbers, constantly pouring in from the north, by which the Danish armies were recruited. This humble beginning of the English navy was successful in its first contest, with six Danish ships, and Alfred was encouraged to increase it considerably the next year; though, when he had built his new fleet, he was obliged to man the vessels principally with foreign sailors.

And now the Danes, having completed the conquest of every other part of England, or rather, having pillaged and desolated it till little more could be forced from the wretched inhabitants, renewed their attacks on Wessex, landing at Wareham, in Dorsetshire, under the command of Gothrun.
A.D. 876. Alfred led an army against their camp, but thought it prudent to offer them money, on condition of their quitting his territories. Gothrun consented to the terms; and when the king required hostages, he was permitted to select them from the Danish camp. He farther asked them to swear to the performance of the treaty; and they swore, after their own manner, by their bracelets, and in the Saxon form on Christian relics. But, when they had received the promised payment, the faithless savages, alike indifferent to any oaths, and to the forfeited lives of their brethren in Alfred's power, burst in the night from their entrenchments, murdered the sleeping soldiers of the Saxon ca-

valry; and, seizing the horses of the slain to mount as many of their own men as possible, rode to Exeter; and wintered there. The great body of their infantry embarked at the same time, to reach the mouth of the Exe; but the fleet was already more than half ruined by a storm, when it was met by Alfred's navy, which completed the destruction of 120 sail of Danish vessels. When Gothrun and his companions heard this, they became willing to treat in earnest; and Wessex was again, for a short interval, cleared of its invaders.

In the mean time Alfred had unhappily lost his self-control; and had alienated the affections of his subjects. It is probable that he had given way to the irritable disposition, to which long continued bodily pains tempt a sufferer; and that his superiority in intellectual acquirements had produced pride; exhibiting itself in the language of petulance and contempt to the ignorant, but haughty nobles of his court. Hence he became at once insulting to those who expected to share his confidence; and stern to such as failed in performing his wishes with the accuracy which they were, really, unable to reach. But though he had thus fallen into that captivity to bad passions, from which he had been so earnest to be rescued at any price, the Lord had not forgotten the zeal with which he had sought to be led in His ways. In the prayer of his youth he had requested, that his evil appetites might be subdued without rendering him contemptible or useless. He was now, for a time, to find himself slighted, and his commands despised, and to be cast aside as useless; and he was to learn by experience, that God could lead him to honour, even through debasement and contempt. Submitting to this visitation with patience; with his pride subdued by an humiliating fall, and with a more thorough conviction of his entire dependence on his Maker; it was mercifully intended that he should come forth more gentle

towards the failings of others, more victorious over his own; and that, thus prepared against the temptations of increased prosperity, he should, like Job, receive *twice as much as he had before*, and be *blessed in the latter end more than in the beginning*.

The attack which drove Alfred from his throne, was not a more powerful one than those which he had, before, successfully diverted. It was headed by the same Gothrun, who now invaded Wessex from Gloucestershire. The Danish marches were made with their usual rapidity; but as the discontented Saxons could not be induced to exert themselves in defence

A.D.
878. of their king, the invaders reached Chippenham, a royal mansion, without opposition, and were near getting possession of Alfred's person.

He fled in the disguise of a common soldier; hiding himself in woods and copses, as he traversed the country, with more expectation of injury than of support from his subjects, if recognized. At length he came to a part of Somersetshire, surrounded by the rivers Thone and Parret, or by marshes impassable for the enemy's horse. Here he entered the cottage of a swineherd, Denulf by name; and finding himself kindly received in the character of an oppressed Saxon, escaped from Danish violence, he took up his abode under this man's humble roof.

It was here that, as he afterwards amused himself with telling the story, when Denulf was out with his herd, and he furbishing his bow, the good-wife of the house bade him attend to the cakes baking on the hearth, whilst she quitted the house. But when left alone, the thoughts of the fallen king wandered far away, and he received a hearty scolding for his neglect on the woman's coming back, and finding one side burnt for want of turning. Even this little occurrence was a wholesome trial, for one lately so haughty; as he had no choice left, but to bear her reproaches, or expose himself to imminent danger; by betraying that he was not accustomed to be

freely addressed by persons of her rank in life. Perhaps the first satisfactory evidence, to himself, of an improvement in disposition, was his patiently bearing her rude remark—That he was ready enough to eat their bread, though he took so little pains to watch it. He mildly answered, that he should be idle indeed, if he were unwilling to take that easy task upon him. And, on the next occasion, he recovered her good-will by his care.

Whilst Alfred was thus learning humility, his subjects were learning, under Danish oppression, to regret bitterly their impatience of his failings. If they had thought themselves *chastised with whips*, under his stern rule, the Danes *chastised them with scorpions*. Numbers fled across the sea, to escape from the cruelties of the Northmen. The report of what was suffered in the conquered districts, gave to those who were still unconquered, the desperate courage of men who feel, that to be subdued is far more dreadful than to die.

The effects of this feeling were soon shewn, on the Devonshire coast. Some Saxon troops had taken refuge in a fortress on a rock, which Ubbo, the Dane, surrounded with an army; expecting that hunger would speedily force them to surrender. But they, seeing no other means of escape, determined rather to attempt breaking, sword in hand, through his camp. And coming down in the night, and making directly for the general's tent, they slew Ubbo himself, seized the Danish standard, and threw their enemies into such a panic, that 1200 of them perished, almost without making any defence; and the rest fled to their vessels, leaving abundant booty for the triumphant Saxons. The standard taken was woven in the shape of a raven. The daughters of Ragnar had made it, and given it to their brothers; and the superstitious pagans used to look, before a battle, for the flapping of its wings; as if it would tell them, by that sign, whether to expect a victory. The

loss of the raven, therefore, dispirited the Danes; as much as this instance of complete success against superior numbers restored the Saxon courage.

This state of things induced Alfred to make known his place of retirement to a few faithful friends. He was soon joined by his wife, and by a small but brave band of adherents. Their first work was to construct a bridge and raised causeway, so narrow as to be easily defended; but giving them the means of passing and repassing on horseback over the marsh which reached from one river to the other. This insular position obtained from them the still remembered name of Athelney, that is, the Noble's isle.

Whilst he and his associates lived here in a precarious way, it happened that a person in distress knocked at the gate, when Alfred's active associates had gone out, to try whether they could procure a meal by fishing. The king was bending over a book; but, hearing a voice implore for bread, he remembered the state of want in which he had himself reached this place of refuge; and bade his wife see what they could spare. She told him, that their little store was reduced to one loaf; and reminded him, that the party gone in quest of food, for them, might return both empty-handed and hungry. Blessed be God, said the king, for what we have. Give the poor Christian half the loaf; and doubt not, but he who was able to feed five thousand men out of five loaves and two fishes, can make the remaining half more than sufficient for our wants.

From the occasional visits of such wanderers, Alfred learned that his subjects would hail his re-appearance with the sincerest joy. He therefore, now, dispatched trusty messengers into Wiltshire, Hampshire, and Dorset, to inform the people that he was still alive; and to summon all true Saxons to meet him in arms at a fixed time near Egbert's stone, in Selwood forest. The summons was obey-

ed with enthusiasm; and the collected multitudes received their king with shouts of delight.

In this spirit he led them on to battle; defeated the Danes, and pursued them to their fortified camp at Bratton. For fourteen days he blockaded them within its intrenchments. Whilst his army was thus detained, the gigantic figure of a horse, on the side of the chalky hill, is supposed to have been cut by his soldiers to commemorate their victory. The white trenches which form the outline of the figure, on the chalk, being strongly contrasted with the green turf of the down, make it a conspicuous object for several miles. In the mean time the want of food broke down both the strength and courage of the Danes, and they humbly begged for mercy. Happily in modern times, the desire of reputation would prevent the most vindictive conqueror from refusing to spare the lives of surrendered enemies. It was not so then. The Danes themselves had been accustomed to spare none who bore arms against them, till their swords were weary with slaughter.

But Alfred had been gaining victories over his passions, whilst he might be thought by his subjects as well as his foes, to have been wasting his time in inaction. Like a merciful man, he was ready to abstain from every thing which a spirit of revenge would have suggested. Like a consummate politician he resolved to abstain from demanding such severe terms, as naturally direct all the weaker party's thoughts and views to hopes or schemes for violating them. Like one who had imbibed the very spirit of his Lord's commands, he devised a plan, for making the present distress of his enemies prove a never-ending source of blessings to them; such as, if successful, should make them love him, and redound to the honour of God.

He freely gave them their lives; demanded no farther cession of their conquests, than that they should quit his hereditary dominions, and the greater

part of Mercia ; encouraged them to become the peaceful cultivators of their remaining ample acquisitions in the north and eastern parts of the island ; but required them to quit their pagan rites, and embrace Christianity.

As their national idolatry had but a very loose hold on the attachment of these armies of wandering robbers, the greater number made no difficulty about submitting to the form of baptism. Thirty of the Danish chiefs, with Gothrun at their head, repaired soon after to Alfred's quarters, and were baptized in his presence ; the king standing godfather to Gothrun, who received at the font the name of Athelstan, and was gratified with several costly presents.

The union of military skill, courage, and generosity, which he had witnessed in Alfred, had won the Dane's heart ; and he remained faithful to the terms of their agreement, though urgently invited to join another army of Northmen, who ascended the Thames in the following year. Such of his men, however, as were unwilling to become Christians, even in name, and to lead a tranquil life, quitted England with these last invaders, and entered the service of Hastings, the most powerful of the northern pirates.

It is much to be regretted that the heads of the Saxon church were incapable of teaching their king, that to baptize such men of blood, without any plausible ground for hoping that they came to the font with either a heart-felt belief in the Gospel, or sincere sorrow for their past sins, was an awful profanation of that sacrament. And if, instead of what was done, Alfred had properly stipulated, that Gothrun should protect and listen with attention to the Christian teachers who should be sent to instruct, and, if possible, convert his people, it is to be feared, that the Saxons could not have provided any competent missionaries. For Alfred himself

has left us this melancholy picture of the ignorance of the national clergy, at this period. "There were very few," says he, "on this side the Humber, who could understand their daily prayers in English," that is, who knew what their Latin forms of prayer meant in English; "or translate any thing written in Latin. I think there were not many beyond the Humber. They were so few, that indeed I cannot recollect a single instance on the south of the Thames, when I took the kingdom."

It must be recollected too, that not to know Latin was, then, the same thing as being unable to read the Scriptures. For only small portions of them had been translated into Saxon. The bible could only be found in Latin; or in its still less understood original tongue, the Hebrew and Greek. If the monks of Peterborough were as ignorant as Alfred found those of Wessex, their boasted library was but useless furniture to them; for all valuable knowledge was, at that time, written in Latin. Indeed the best Saxon monks of these ages were, in general, only more skilful farmers, or more ingenious artisans, than the people about them. As to any peculiar devotion to the offices of religion, that had come to mean no more than a readiness in going through numerous forms and ceremonies, and singing their chapel service loudly, in a tongue which we are thus told that scarcely any of them understood.

From the native clergy, therefore, Alfred could receive no instruction, where he most needed it. Neither could he expect any useful assistance from them in the great work of enlightening and improving his people; which was now the wish nearest his heart. To human eyes he stood alone in the attempt; but the LORD gave him rest, for nearly fifteen years, from all his enemies round about; and gave him understanding *and largeness of heart*,

above any of the kings who had been before him, to make good use of that rest.

The beneficial effects of his wise government were, indeed, fully felt only in his own dominions; which, agreeably to the late treaty, consisted of that portion of England which lies south of a line, drawn along the Thames from its mouth, till it reaches the Lea, then turning up that river to Hertford, continued to Bedford, and drawn in a nearly straight direction from thence to Chester. This was more than his predecessors had ever had in their actual possession; for to Wessex, Sussex, and Kent, was now added the most valuable and largest part of Mercia; no longer merely as a tributary ally, but completely under his dominion. And though Alfred was never led by ambition to attempt extending his authority, by conquests, beyond the line once prescribed, yet the Danes of Northumbria and East Anglia, conscious that they were intruders, and considering Alfred as the head of the Saxon race, and therefore the representative of the kings whom they had displaced, freely acknowledged his superiority; and allowed, perhaps, more weight to his influence, than their Saxon predecessors would have done to Ethelwulf.

This influence was not employed to undermine their power, nor to increase his own consequence; but for the happier purpose of promoting the glory of God, and mutual good-will among men. The first use he made of it was, to persuade Gothrun to join him in passing laws for the due observance of the sabbath; for the maintenance of the clergy, and for their punishment if disorderly. Alfred also stipulated with him, that the penalty assigned for any personal injury should be the same, whether the sufferer was a Saxon or Dane. Thus practically teaching them to consider each other as brethren; and procuring for the Saxons under Danish

rule, who had hitherto been wantonly trampled upon, the same protection as their conquerors gave to their own fellow countrymen.

And now, that he was bent on improving the condition and character of his subjects by every practicable mean, Alfred deemed it necessary to begin with procuring more ample instruction for himself. He was already far more learned than any of the military chiefs or nobles about him; but he was still wiser in that he knew his own learning to be but little removed from ignorance. So he sought, amongst the neighbouring nations, for the most learned men who could be induced to come, and teach him as they would the humblest pupil. The most celebrated of these were Asser, a Welchman; John, the Irishman; and Grimbold, a Fleming. The first has left an account of his being invited by messengers from Alfred, and brought to the king in Sussex. I was kindly received, says he, and the king promised to give me more than I should resign, if I would quit my preferment in Wales, and become his companion. Asser doubted, whether it would be proper to desert thus, for lucre, the country to which he was indebted for his education. Give me then half your time, said the king, and pass the remainder in Wales.

Having returned home, and consulted his friends, Asser, with their approbation, accepted Alfred's offer, and attended him for eight months; translating to him and reading with him. It was the king's custom, he tells us, either to read books himself, or to have them read to him, day and night; amidst all his afflictions of mind and body. But though his hours of study thus shortened those which most men would have given to the indulgence of leisure by day, and of repose by night, Alfred must not be suspected of allowing his favourite pursuits to interfere with other duties. The arrangement of his time was as regular, as it was exemplary. Eight

hours of the four and twenty were allotted to business; eight he devoted to study, and to prayer, knowing that if he sought not on his knees to draw down a blessing on his other occupations, they would only prove unprofitable toil; the remaining eight, were all he allowed both for sleep and refreshment. Such was the self-denying life of a king, and a sufferer from daily attacks of acute bodily pain.

So anxious was Alfred that this division of his time might be accurately maintained, that he had recourse to a device for ensuring it, both curious in itself, and well suited to remind us how many comforts we enjoy, from the progress made in the arts of life, without feeling due thankfulness for them. The king had neither clock, watch, nor hour-glass, to help him to measure the hours as they pass; but he found that six wax candles, of a certain weight, if used in succession, would burn from midday to midday again; and marking off a twelfth part of each candle, the time in which that was consumed would be twenty minutes. But when this contrivance was first put in practice, the wind rushing through the doors and windows, and numerous chinks in the walls, so rudely was even a royal palace built, made the candles burn with such irregularity, that Alfred's object seemed likely to be quite defeated. To remedy this, says Asser, he thought skilfully, and wisely; and having observed that horn, when scraped thin, is transparent, he made cases of horn and wood to protect his candles, which answered admirably. Thus were horn lanthorns invented.

If Alfred was careful of his own time, he was no less cautious not to make unnecessary demands on the time of others. He had three lists made out, of the persons required to be in attendance upon him, and made them wait by courses. The officers of each list, in its turn, coming into employment for a month.

With the like punctuality, and with the same attention to his duties to God and his neighbour, Alfred required his treasurer to divide his revenue into two equal portions; the one to be applied to purposes of state, the other devoted to the service of religion and charity. The first half was again subdivided into three sums; to be spent on his household and attendants; on the strangers whom he had invited from foreign countries; and on the numerous workmen, whom he constantly employed.

The other half was divided into four portions. One to be given to the needy. In the distribution of this he kept in mind the advice of pope Gregory. "Give not little to him who needs much; nor much to him who needs little. Refuse not the man who should have something; give not to the man who should have nothing." The second portion was devoted to the support of a monastery which he built at Athelney, and of a nunnery at Shaftsbury. The third was employed in the support of schools for the instruction of the young gentry of his kingdom. The last was distributed in presents to foreign, as well as to the English churches and clergy.

The revenues thus distributed were in reality the produce of the king's personal estates; with the addition of sums forfeited, as fines, by offenders. Taxes were only levied for extraordinary purposes; the expence of serving in the king's wars being borne by the soldiers themselves, who were yeomen possessing lands held on that condition.

That the expence which Alfred incurred in the maintenance of two monasteries, may not be supposed to have been wholly misapplied in the support of superstition, it is proper to mention, that those establishments were intended by him to be places of education; though, certainly, with the ill-judged addition of that system of unnecessary self-mortification, which, though often eluded, was the professed object of all monastic rules. A learned foreigner was

induced, at Alfred's request, to take charge of the monastery at Athelney; being a person at once capable of giving instruction, and conscientiously disposed both to observe and enforce the discipline which every inmate of the monastery must have considered himself as bound, in duty, to obey. But the coarse-minded beings, whom he was endeavouring to train up into self-denying saints, would have thought that to live like their king was an intolerable restraint; and when their abbot persisted in demanding more privations, and called them up to midnight prayers, they rose upon the good man, and murdered him with their knives.

The portion devoted to the establishment of schools, unattached to monasteries, produced a very different result. The seed thus sown by Alfred was abundantly blessed, and grew up, with the growth of the national prosperity, into a magnificent tree, whose fruits are amongst the most precious riches of our highly favoured land. Succeeding benefactors thought it well to employ their gifts in perpetuating and increasing the means of instruction, which they saw that this wise king had planned; and others, in after ages, leaving estates for similar purposes, naturally directed that the colleges, which they wished to found, should be built where learned men were already collected; till, at length, the humble schools of Alfred became the splendid University of Oxford, which therefore justly honours him as her founder.

But Alfred not only employed his income and his influence in forming scholars, but he taught them by his example, what the learned of all times and countries have need to be reminded of; that he who has been blessed with means and leisure for mental improvement, should use the talent entrusted to him for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. To employ it only in producing new gratifications for himself may be worse even than burying it in a napkin.

No sooner had his assiduous attention to the lessons of his foreign instructors enabled the king to master the much coveted Latin tongue, than instead of using his well-earned acquisition merely for his own recreation, he took upon himself the task of translating from it a number of useful books; for the purpose of communicating to his unlearned subjects the valuable stores of wisdom contained in that language. The principle on which he engaged in this humble labour, is avowed in a letter of his to bishop Wulfsig, whom he wished to persuade to the same good work. "I request," says he, "that you will do as, I believe, you are disposed; and that, since you are very liberal of worldly things, you would also impart the wisdom which God has given you, as widely as you can. Think what punishment will come upon us for this world, if we have neither loved wisdom, nor let others have it. We love to be called Christians. But it is the name we like; very few, the duties.—I mind that the law was first found in the Hebrew tongue, and that the Greeks translated it into their own language; and the Latins, when they became acquainted with it, turned it also into their tongue; and in like manner every other Christian nation translated some part. Wherefore I think it better, if you so think, that we also translate some books, the most necessary for all men to know, into our own language; and this we may very easily do, with God's help, if we have quiet; that all the free youth of the English nation may learn to read them, before they turn to any thing else. And let those farther learn the Latin language, who wish to advance."

Such were some of the fruits of those hours which Alfred devoted to study. Other beneficial consequences were seen in the wisdom of the laws which he drew up, and persuaded the great council of the nation to adopt. For his learning enabled him to select what was good out of the customs of

many other people; beginning with such of the laws which God gave to the Israelites, as were not obviously intended to cease when the better covenant came. Thus the ten commandments, and the 21st, 22d, with the beginning of the 23d chapter of Exodus, became part of the law of the land.

But here Alfred, being unable to refer to the Hebrew original, was imposed upon by a wicked fraud of the Romish church. For that church, having now established the adoration of images, and yet perceiving this to be obviously a contradiction of the second commandment, blotted it out from the Latin; using, at different times, different expedients to make up the number ten. Thus in Alfred's copy the third commandment stands second; whilst instead of the tenth are these words, "Make thou not gods of gold, nor of silver." By such a miserable concealment of the truth were not only the ignorant multitude, but even their enlightened king, prevented from knowing that when they bowed down to their painted saints of wood or stone, they were acting in direct disobedience to a positive command enjoined under the most fearful threats.

On the other hand, by his proper substitution of the word *Christian*, in the law which gave every *Hebrew* slave the option of his freedom at the end of six years*, Alfred would, in a very short time, have put an end to slavery within his territories, had it been as easy to enforce laws as to make them. But laws produce very little effect, unless the general opinion is so much in favour of their utility that the great body of the people are disposed to exert themselves to have the violators punished; or the government be at once powerful, and so punctually served by the ministers of the law, that every one shall dread the effects of disobedience. But this law could never be popular with the Saxon freemen,

* Exod. xxi. 3. 6.

who were nearly all slave-holders. And, as for the judges, Alfred seems to have found it very difficult to discover persons, qualified by knowledge and impartiality for that important office. When indeed freemen were injured by their ignorance or corruption, the sufferer would frequently be able to make his case known to the king; and Alfred was peculiarly stern against misconduct, in those who ought to have dispensed justice.

A corrupt, or wilfully unjust judge, if convicted, was, in his reign, sure to be executed. But though he thus made magistrates tremble to offend, in any way which might reach his ears, the slave would probably know nothing of a law, at variance with all previous customs, entitling him to claim his liberty after a fixed time. It would not be the interest of persons in authority, living near, to bring his master before the judge for neglecting this law; neither would such judges, as were only kept in order by terror, make diligent enquiry about the observance of a law made, solely, for the benefit of a class of people, who had no one to complain for them to the king of its neglect. Hence this merciful law did so little towards abolishing slavery, that historians have taken no notice whatsoever of its results; and, after Alfred's death, the very existence of such a statute was quickly forgotten by the people.

In his provisions for checking robbery and violence, Alfred was more successful. For this purpose he divided the country into hundreds, and then again into tithings; or into districts containing a hundred families, and sub-districts containing ten. The hundred was made answerable for the conduct of each tithing; and every tithing for the conduct of each individual in it; being bound to compensate for the wrong he had done, or to bring him into the court of the hundred, there to be tried, and punished

if guilty. But if any person living within a certain tithing, was known to be of such bad character, that the neighbouring families would not admit him into the number of those for whom they were bound to answer, he was considered as out of the protection of the law, and had fair warning that, if any mischief was done, suspicion would rest on him till the guilt was brought home to some other person. On the other hand, if one of the tithing was injured, all united in requiring compensation. If one suffered a loss, the others were expected to aid him. Thus it was, at once, a system of mutual restraint and mutual defence, extending over the whole of his territories.

In another of this king's regulations we find the first traces of that invaluable rule of English law, that in case of any charge seriously affecting his life or property, no man shall be punished as guilty till he has been declared so by a jury of his equals. The words of Alfred's enactment were, "If a king's thane is accused of murder, let him clear himself by twelve king's thanes. If an inferior thane is accused, let him clear himself by eleven of his equals and one king's thane." That is, the accused was to be deemed innocent, if this number of his equals should declare him so, upon their oaths; which, of course, they could not do without first investigating the case. So that, in other words, he must have given himself up to be tried by a jury of his peers, and their verdict was allowed to establish his innocence.

But whilst the endeavours of Alfred to make his subjects wiser, better, and happier, were conducted with more sagacity and steadiness than could have been hoped for in a sovereign who should have turned his attention to nothing else, the king's preparations for the defence of his country, and his management of the war when it was invaded, at the latter end of his reign, by Hastings, were such as

would have been justly admired in a person whose views had never risen above the desire of military fame.

It was Alfred, who first perceived that, for the protection of England, a navy must be formed, capable of meeting its enemies on the seas. In the early struggles of his reign he had collected a small naval force; and when he was possessed of ampler means, he built ships superior to the Danish vessels both in size and make. But as ships would be of little use without able seamen, this studious law-giver, was neither prevented by his habits nor by his suffering health, from embarking and accompanying his fleet in several expeditions, to give the crews experience, and encourage them by his presence. Neither did it escape the observation of this wise prince, that a naval force cannot be long maintained in a useful condition without foreign commerce. Hence he employed different persons to explore the northern seas, and inform him, by what kind of people the coasts were inhabited; what were their wants; and what they had, to part with in return.

The report of one of these navigators, who reached the mouth of the Vistula, where Dantzic now stands, has a strange sound in our ears. For he tells Alfred, that the king and the richest men of that country, drank mare's milk; but the poor, and the servants, drank mead. The apparent improbability of this account, however, disappears, when we consider that these people may have brought their milk by fermentation into a spirituous state, as the Tartars do; whilst honey being, as the same person mentions, very abundant, might be employed in forming large quantities of a light and weak beverage, like the thin wines drank at this day by the poor in the vineyard countries.

Another person, going round north of Norway and Lapland, brought the king an account of the

harbour of Archangel. In after times this account, which Alfred had left on record, was forgotten; and it was not till the end of Edward the Sixth's reign that the English merchants again found their way to Archangel, though it was the only port by which access could be had then, or for above an hundred years after, to the trade of Russia. But Alfred's views extended still farther. His reading informed him, that a Christian church had been planted, as the story went, by the Apostle St. Thomas, amongst the heathen of India; and, difficult as it was, in Alfred's age, to plan a journey to parts of the world so distant and so little known, the king sent a Saxon bishop to communicate with these Christians, and carry them a friendly present. The messengers made their journey in safety; and brought back to England some specimens of the peculiar productions of the East.

Let it be remembered, that the king whose sagacious designs embraced so wide a range, and who did so much, was but sovereign of the lesser half of England; that his subjects were, probably, fewer in number than the present inhabitants of Yorkshire, and more ignorant than the worst peasantry of the worst parts of Ireland; that the Saxon nobility supplied no statesmen capable of seconding his views; that when he began to reign, he found a clergy having neither spiritual nor worldly learning; a fierce enemy in the heart of his little kingdom; and its ordinary resources nearly destroyed; whilst he himself had broken health and unpopular manners. When his success, and the difficulties against which he had to contend, are viewed together, it is nearly impossible to avoid perceiving that the blessing for which his prayers were so constantly and earnestly offered, was poured out upon all he undertook. And, therefore, we may safely conclude, that the toil and the anxiety which the renewed attacks of the Danes brought upon him, being permitted by the same gracious God, were also blessed

to Alfred in their consequences. Perhaps this interruption of his benevolent projects was necessary, to keep him from ascribing his prosperity solely to his own wisdom ; perhaps the pleasure of having at last won the sincere love of his people, who fondly called him " England's darling," and the proofs of sincere respect shewn to him by neighbouring and generally hostile nations, would have made him utterly incapable, without this last proof of the uncertainty of all worldly happiness, of *setting his affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.*

As for his people, in addition to their other sins, they had been guilty of conduct very closely resembling that which once drew forth an especial declaration from the Almighty, that for it he would bring enemies into the land of Judah, and *make the cities thereof a desolation.* The Saxons, like the Jews, had consented to a law, which said, *When thy brother hath served thee six years, thou shall let him go free from thee.* But more than six years had passed over the head of every slave ; yet the people *had not hearkened unto the law, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother.* And now affliction came upon them, like that which was brought upon the Jews ; when the Lord said in his anger, *Behold I proclaim a liberty for you, to the sword*.*

It was in 893 that Hastings, after having been long the scourge, and almost the conqueror of France, crossed the channel from Boulogne with 300 vessels, and landed an army, on the shores of Kent, intended to subdue the Saxon power. For three years these invaders persisted in their attempt ; being aided, and reinforced by numerous recruits from the Danes of East Anglia and Northumbria. It is difficult to conceive the extent of the misery which these armies of robbers, hardened in blood, must have inflicted on the country, traver-

sing the heart of England, as they did, five times; from Kent to Cheshire; and from Exeter into Northumbria. Yet, wherever they marched, Alfred was quickly on the pursuit; prepared to cut off every straggling marauder; and watching their entrenched camps for a favourable opportunity of attack. The last important action of the war may serve to shew, that Alfred conducted his campaigns with a policy very superior in value to mere animal courage; at the same time that it will exhibit in a striking light, the prompt decision and activity of his adversaries.

The Danes had brought their vessels, or
A. D. barges, for such they in reality were, up the
896.

Lea, and formed a camp near Hertford. Alfred, on this, took such a position as enabled him to protect the Londoners; whilst they gathered in the corn growing on the sides of the vale through which that river flows. As the season advanced the water became shallower; and the king, having formed his plan as he viewed the enemy's position from a neighbouring eminence, ordered stakes to be driven into the bed of the river below Ware, to prevent the Danish vessels from retreating down the stream; and then began to cut other channels, by which he so lowered the water, that the Danes lost all hope of making any farther use of them. On this they deserted their camp in a body, and, striking across the country, were next heard of on the banks of the Severn. There they again fortified a camp, and seized the vessels employed on that river to form another fleet. By this time, however, Hastings was convinced that he could gain no permanent possession of the country; and quitting England with as many of his followers as he could collect shipping to convey, suffered still farther losses in contests with the Saxon navy.

If Alfred thus proved himself both brave and politic in war, it is still more pleasing to find him

distinguish himself by such generous humanity, during its progress, as was in that age quite unexampled. The wife and children of Hastings twice fell into his power; and each time he sent them to Hastings, safe, and loaded with presents. Thus did this Christian king show himself to be one of the true *children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.* And though Hastings continued both the one and the other, having too hard a heart to be capable of appreciating this kindness in an adversary, it mattered little. For He who commanded his followers thus to do good to their enemies, where they could *hope for nothing again* from them, has declared that *the reward shall be great*; and He will bestow it himself, *good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.*

After the country had been cleared of its last invaders, a frightful pestilence, the usual consequence of the deficient and unwholesome food to which these wars of devastation reduced the wretched inhabitants, added to the afflictions of the nation. But its greatest loss was the death of Alfred; who *rested from his labours*, when he had but completed the fifty-first year of his age. A.D.
900.

CHAPTER VI.

The Reigns of Edward the Elder; Athelstan; and Edmund.

ALFRED was succeeded by his son Edward; who, since the reign of another Saxon king of the same name, has usually been distinguished by the title of Edward the Elder.

The late king had formed to himself the idea of

a state of society very superior in every thing good and reasonable to all that he saw about him; and it had been the general aim of his government to educate and prepare his subjects for the attainment of that more elevated condition. But Edward's views, like those of the generality of mankind, embraced little more than the scene before his eyes, and the immediate consequence of passing events. Hence, though not wanting in common sense, his wisest councils had no farther object than to correct present evils, when they were felt to be inconvenient; to repel dangers, when they became alarming; or to obtain some increase of power. The astonishing efforts which had been made by Alfred, to enlighten and improve the people, were therefore discontinued in this reign; whilst a circumstance which occurred at Edward's accession led, in the end, to a considerable extension of his territories.

Ethelwold, one of those children of Ethelred whose claims were passed by when the thanes of Wessex elected Alfred, had ventured to come forward, on the death of his uncle, as a competitor for the succession; but was again rejected. He soon after withdrew in discontent to Northumbria, and easily persuaded the Danes to make the support of his rights their excuse for invading the Saxon provinces. But Edward wanted neither bravery, nor military skill; he was popular with his subjects; and all knew that the real object of the Danes was pillage. Ethelwold and his allies were therefore resolutely resisted. He perished in battle; and this war, which Edward had not been guilty of seeking, led, after a struggle of some years, to his obtaining and keeping possession of East Anglia, and of that part of Mercia lately subject to the Danes. By these conquests Edward became the sovereign of all the county south of the Humber, with a reputation which rendered even the Danes of Northumbria attentive to his orders; whilst the

lowland Scots called him their Lord ; and the princes of Wales voluntarily brought him tribute.

This extended authority Edward bequeathed to his son Athelstan ; whom it, unhappily, tempted to devote his life and thoughts to the projects and toils of ambition.

ATHELSTAN was thirty years of age when he succeeded to the throne. He loved A.D.
924. power, and to be honoured of men, more than he loved wealth ; which made him liberal in his conduct towards those whose esteem or support he wished to obtain ; and he had, besides, all the worldly wisdom requisite for employing his influence and resources advantageously, in the pursuit of those objects on which his heart was too much fixed. These qualities procured for him an almost uninterrupted career of worldly prosperity. At the beginning of his reign some chieftains were disposed to resist his claims to the crown, on the plea that his mother, the daughter of a neat-herd, was of too humble rank ever to have been married to king Edward. A member of the royal family, named Elfred, was even charged with entering into a conspiracy to seize Athelstan at Winchester, and deprive him of sight. This charge Elfred denied, and Athelstan sent him to Rome, to clear himself by an oath taken in the pope's presence. He took the required oath before the altar of St. Peter ; and the pope sent word to Athelstan, that Elfred had no sooner sworn than he fell down, and, being carried out by his servants, expired the third night after. As this pope was an unprincipled wretch, and Athelstan has recorded that, out of gratitude to St. Peter, he had thought it right to give Elfred's forfeited estates to a monastery, there is too much reason to fear that wicked means were used to bring about this unfortunate prince's death ; which the pope,

with such dreadful hypocrisy, ascribed to the miraculous interference of the Apostle.

Whilst desirous to strengthen himself against the possible consequences of these domestic feuds, Athelstan had given his sister in marriage to Sight-ric, king of the Northumbrian Danes; a heathen, who had murdered his own brother, but felt no objection to being called a Christian on the day of betrothing. The Saxon princess, however, was soon dismissed again; and Athelstan made her ill usage a pretext for attacking and conquering Northumbria. Sightric was dead before the invasion began, and his sons were obliged to flee. One of them, Anlaf, gained friends in Ireland and Norway; and after ten years of exile he made his appearance in the Humber, at the head of a numerous fleet, manned by the Scots and Northmen.

A.D.
933.

His first enterprize, after landing, was successful; but when Athelstan had gained time to collect and bring up his forces, he sent Anlaf a message; telling him, That he must quit England; but might withdraw unmolested, if he would restore the plunder already taken.

The messengers reach Anlaf's camp in the night, he rose from his bed, and assembled his earls, who determined on an attempt to surprize Athelstan's quarters; and Anlaf undertook to ascertain the position of the Saxon forces. To effect this purpose he disguised himself as a minstrel; mixed unsuspected with the followers of the royal army; and was invited to play his harp in the king's presence. Athelstan, who was at table, sent him money for his song; which the Dane accepted, not to rouse suspicion. But his pride could not brook the thoughts of bearing about the wages of his enemy; and he buried the gold, as soon as he had quitted the tent. This singular action was observed by a Northumbrian soldier, who, in consequence, eyeing the harper

with attention, recognized his former prince. When Anlaf had left the camp this man hastened to inform Athelstan, who the pretended minstrel was. Being rebuked for not having seized the Danish chief, he frankly answered, "The oath I have lately taken to you, O king, I once gave to Anlaf. If I had betrayed him, how could you trust me? But, if you will deign to take your servant's advice, remove your tent now to another quarter." Athelstan did so; and the bishop of Sherborne arriving soon after, with a body of soldiers, pitched his tent on the spot which the king had quitted. In the night the Danes entered the camp; and the prelate, who had thus come to mix in battle, was slain before the Northmen were repulsed.

In a desperate engagement, which took place two days after, Anlaf fought till, all but his own brave troops having been put to flight, the Saxon army was gradually closing round him. His retreat, and the entire dispersion of his allies and followers, left Athelstan the undisputed master of all the countries once possessed by the different Saxon tribes in Britain. The Scottish king had before surrendered his son, as a hostage for his submission; and now the Welsh were obliged to pay the penalty of having fought in Anlaf's cause; being required to bring Athelstan a yearly tribute of twenty pounds of gold, three hundred of silver, and two hundred head of cattle.

In the pride of conquest the Saxon monarch now exchanged the title of king of the West Saxons, which his predecessors had hitherto borne, for that of *King of all Britain*. He certainly possessed a paramount authority over nearly the whole island; and was, in reality, the first king of England.

It has been observed, that Athelstan had abundance of worldly wisdom, and of that liberality which grudges no expence in the purchase of popular applause. A remarkable proof of his policy appears

in one of his laws for the encouragement of commerce; by which it is enacted, That a merchant having made three voyages across the wide sea with a ship and cargo of his own, shall be advanced to the dignity of a thane. Another law equally proclaims his attention to the poor. By this he commands, that every reeve* in the kingdom shall maintain one poor Englishman; and that, out of every two of the king's farms, there should be distributed monthly to the poor a certain quantity of meal, a gammon of bacon, or a ram worth fourpence, with four cheeses; that at Easter, thirty-pence, or a suit of clothes should be given away, and a slave out of those who had become such by forfeiture, restored to his liberty.

Money must have been very scarce when a ram would only fetch fourpence, or about a shilling in modern money. But the value which commodities bear, when compared with each other, affects the comforts of the people much more than the money price. The farmer's labourer must have been very ill clad, when he could not procure a suit of clothes till he had laid up thirty pence; at a time when that sum was the price of more than seven rams, or, as we learn elsewhere, of a fat ox. Till manufactures flourish, raiment will be proportionably much dearer than meat; yet in considering the above prices, allowance must be made for the smaller size of the cattle, whilst the art of securing good winter food for them was very little understood. Whether meat was cheap, or dear, depends upon what the price of labour then was; which cannot be accurately ascertained, but must have been very low; for the price of a slave, whose labour the purchaser had for life, was but two hundred pence.

Perhaps nothing can be mentioned more truly

* A Saxon officer, having the government of a town or district; from whence come the designations of borough-reeve, and of Shire-reeve, or Sheriff.

creditable to Athelstan, than his thus providing for a regular distribution of charity from the produce of his estates; though the accompanying declaration, that he did it by the advice of his bishops to obtain the forgiveness of his sins, gives his donation too much the character of an attempt to buy heaven with money, and make a bargain with the Most High. Had his Bishops been better acquainted with the Scriptures, he would have been taught to remember the poor for Christ's sake, who has required this at our hands. And that he might be zealous to do all things for the sake of Christ, they would have taught him, that the forgiveness of our sins was earned by the sufferings which Christ voluntarily underwent for us; and could never have been purchased by any thing less precious.

Men of the world, coteremporaries of Athelstan, would have been slow to believe that the king needed instruction in things which it is every one's duty to know; for the submission of all his rivals in Britain, and the respect of foreign sovereigns proved him, in their eyes, to be the wisest politician of his age. Mankind are ever disposed to admire successful ambition, unless it terrifies them by being united with cruelty, or disgusts them by the display of excessive selfishness; and Athelstan's conduct, towards such persons as did not stand in the way of his own schemes for aggrandisement, was generous and humane.

When the Normans conquered Brittany, many of the nobles fled to England. Athelstan received them kindly, and took charge of the education of their young prince Alan, who, when he grew up, returned and recovered possession of his native country. The son of a dethroned king of France, by his queen Edgiva, the sister of Athelstan, was in like manner brought up for thirteen years in the English court, till the French nobles sent an embassy to invite him back; pledging themselves to Athelstan, whose in-

fluence had contributed to the success of the royalist party, that his ward should be respectfully received and acknowledged as king.

A prince of Aquitaine married a second of Athelstan's sisters. A third was sought in marriage by Hugo, the ancestor of the present French royal family. A fourth was summoned into Germany, to give her hand to the emperor's eldest son; a fifth became an Italian princess. Thus the grand children of Alfred, a king whom ambition never seduced to attempt conquests, or form subtle devices for the aggrandisement of his family, were called to share the greatest dignities of Europe, in as remarkable a manner as the children of Offa were disappointed, or degraded from the petty thrones which he waded through so much toil and guilt to seat them on.

From another quarter the reputation of Athelstan had brought a young Norwegian prince to his court. Harald, king of Norway, had subdued the numerous piratical chiefs and robbers, amongst whom that country had previously been shared; but he saw that his elder sons were men of violence, and wished Haco, the younger, to be protected from the dangers to which their ambition was likely to expose him, and to receive the advantage of being educated in a somewhat more civilized society. As far as Athelstan could instruct this young prince, he acted as a faithful guardian. Haco was taught Christianity, though under the debased form into which it had unhappily degenerated; and when Eric, Harald's eldest son, having murdered such of his brothers as were within reach, had made his subjects fear his cruelty, they invited Haco to come to their help. Athelstan provided his pupil with a fleet and soldiers; but when they reached Norway, Eric, The Brother-killer, as they called him, was universally deserted; so Haco was chosen in his stead, and he is still remembered by the happy name of Haco, The Good.

But whilst Athelstan thus increased in prosperity and all worldly honour, and exhibited in his conduct many popular virtues, there is too much reason to doubt that his heart was a stranger to the love, though not unacquainted with the fear of God. For no man could love a holy God, and at the same time admire a wicked Eric; who, having been expelled from his native country, was become a public robber on the seas. Athelstan, too evidently, thought the support of a strong arm, and a bold heart, more valuable than the favour of God. For he no sooner heard that Eric was at the head of a fleet of hardy and desperate pirates, than, admiring his unbroken spirit, he sent to say, that being his father's old friend, he would gladly receive him. Eric came; was admitted to baptism; and made vice-roy of Northumbria. Now if Athelstan really had given him this promotion purely out of regard to the memory of his old friendship for Harald, private partiality is no sufficient justification for thus neglecting his duty to his subjects, and putting them under the power of a notoriously wicked and cruel ruler. And, in the sight of God, it was *strengthening the hands of an evil doer*; which He hath declared to be offensive to Him; because the natural consequence is, *that none doth return from his wickedness*; even a "brother-killer" finding, that his offences had not prevented his being honoured and trusted by one thought to be a wise and Christian king.

The folly of trusting such a character as Eric with so important a government, was felt in the succeeding reigns. For Athelstan himself died, in the prime of life, before the mischievous effects of his ill bestowed confidence had begun to display themselves.

EDMUND succeeded his brother at the A.D. age of eighteen. The kingdom was immedi- 940.

ately invaded by Anlaf, who rapidly recovered all that Athelstan had gained from the Danes. But when Edmund consented to this re-division of England, it was with a condition, favourable to the younger of the two; viz. that the survivor should become monarch of the whole. And Anlaf died the following year.

The Cumbrian Britons, who still preserved their independence, had lately acted, on several occasions, as allies to the Danes; and Edmund, being obliged to raise an army, in order to recover Northumbria, proceeded to the conquest of Cumberland. The two sons of Dunmail, the Cumbrian king, fell into his power, and were cruelly deprived of their sight; after which barbarous deed Edmund gave their country up to Malcolm, king of the Scots, on condition of holding it as his subject, and defending the north of England from Danish invaders. Having thus triumphed over all opposition, the young king returned southwards, elated with his successes; but it was only to meet a disgraceful death.

On St. Augustine's day, Edmund was holding a great feast, when he perceived, amongst the guests in his hall, a chief of banditti, by name Leof, whom, in the early part of his reign, he had sentenced to banishment. Now it so happened, that in the concluding sentences of an enactment published by the king, perhaps but a few days before this festival, he had declared that his court should be no place of refuge for blood-shedders; and had expressed his confidence that his thanes would attend to his most earnest request, by standing firmly to a covenant made against the harbouring of thieves. The king's indignation, therefore, at seeing Leof thus insolently venture into his presence, was excessive. He sprang from his seat and seized the robber by the hair to drag him to the ground. A desperate struggle ensued; and, before the nobles present interfered, Edmund had received a mortal stab.

Drunkenness was the besetting sin of the Saxon nation ; and the king had not risen superior in this respect, to his subjects. He could not have been sober when he suffered his passion to drive him into a contest of personal violence with a thief ; instead of shewing himself the calm and dignified dispenser of strict, but even justice, to the violator of his laws. The nobles, whose more prompt assistance might have saved their sovereign's life, had evidently lost their presence of mind from the effects of the same degrading vice.

CHAPTER VII.

The age of Dunstan.

As EDMUND left only infant children, the nation chose his brother Edred for their king ; A. D. 946.
 who was, thus, the third of Edward's sons called in succession to the throne.

The only political event of any importance, during his reign, was his contest with Eric. The ungrateful Norwegian, after having deserted the government of Northumbria for his more favourite occupation, piracy, had returned to foment and head a rebellion against Edred ; that he might seize the sovereignty of the extensive district so improperly entrusted to him ; instead of holding his authority under the king. But Eric perished in battle ; and Edred divided Northumbria into counties ; each to be governed by its own alderman, sheriff, and other proper officers, like the rest of England.

The king's health was so infirm that the fear of death was always before his eyes. Such a state has been an invaluable blessing to many ; by compelling them to perceive the emptiness and uncertainty of the

gratifications pursued by the world. It might have brought Edred to fix his most valued hopes and warmest affections on his Saviour alone; but, in his days, the clergy had almost entirely usurped the place of Christ. All, who were not peculiarly enlightened, believed submission to them to be the only way to heaven; having been taught that the approbation of the clergy would make the gates of heaven fly open before them, whilst their anger would as surely bring down its severest sentence. Instead, therefore, of searching the Scriptures for the saving knowledge of the will of God, Edred acted as if all his hopes of salvation were to rest on his humble compliance with the wishes of two proud and ambitious churchmen, archbishop Odo, and the celebrated Dunstan.

The latter was a person whose conduct had more influence on the state of society than any of the kings his cotemporaries; so that the history of Dunstan is, really, the history of the times in which they lived.

He is said to have been born in the year of Athelstan's accession, but was probably somewhat older. One of his uncles, Athelm, was archbishop of Canterbury; another, Elphege, was bishop of Winchester; and he was, besides, related to the royal family. He received his education from some Irish priests, fixed at Glastonbury; and even in childhood his ambition displayed itself; for so eager was he to take the lead of his school-fellows, that his excessive exertions brought on a violent fever. In the height of a delirious attack he quitted his bed, unobserved by the nurse, and running to the church, ascended a scaffold erected for repairing the roof, and was found asleep within, on the floor; having got down, he knew not how.

In process of time this adventure was exaggerated, by himself or others, into a most miraculous story; of his putting to flight opposing devils; and of a

company of angels bearing him up, so that he received no hurt in his fall from the highest part of the roof of Glastonbury church. By ascribing the preservation of an ill-watched boy to something so like that interference of the heavenly host, which the Lord himself refused to require, without necessity, whoever invented the fiction did his part towards giving this poor sinner that honour, which the Holy Spirit had chosen to describe as befitting the Son of the Most High.

With the like boldness of falsehood a story was invented of his mother's being warned by a sign, before his birth, that he should be a light to lighten the English. When Dunstan grew up, and had resolved to seek distinction in the church, he employed his knowledge of the mechanical arts, and every expedient which his ingenuity could devise, to propagate the belief of miraculous interposition being more frequently and freely employed for his personal benefit, or gratification, than it was for that of any one of the Apostles.

Had not the Scriptures been grievously neglected, men would have perceived, on comparing Dunstan's conduct with what is there said, that he was evidently one of those persons described by St. Paul, as *coming after the working of Satan, with lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*. But the Apostle had prophesied of the men of that age, saying, *because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved. For this cause GOD shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie**. This was now remarkably fulfilled. Had not Dunstan's cotemporaries been wanting in *the love of truth*, they would have studied more in *His word, which is truth*. And then they would have allowed *no man to deceive them by any*

* 2 THESS. ii. 9. 11.

means; being warned by another prophecy of the same Apostle, that those teachers, who should come *speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron*, should be distinguished by their *forbidding to marry**. Now the whole of Dunstan's public life, and all the influence he could obtain, by honest or evil means, were devoted, next to his own aggrandizement, to effectually forbidding marriage amongst the clergy.

The popes had long struggled for the same object, and had only permitted marriage in the lowest class of attendants about the church; but the devastation made by the Danes had so thinned the ranks of the clergy, that the Saxon bishops had been obliged to allow these married attendants to fill up the numerous vacancies in the higher orders of churchmen. Hence, as their cathedral-service required the presence of several ministers to join in celebrating it, a body of married clergy was collected in cathedral towns, under the name of canons; who received the revenues of estates devoted to the payment of such service.

Several monasteries were occupied by persons of the same description; but the nobles, whose ancestors had founded these monasteries, remembered that their estates had been given to purchase the prayers of the monks; and they thought that every privation to which a monk submitted, made his prayers more valuable, and counted besides as a compensation for his benefactor's unrestrained indulgence of every appetite. Dunstan's exertions to expel the canons, and to force the monks to observe a new and strict rule, called from its inventor the Benedictine, were therefore popular at court; whilst the ignorant crowd believed in his pretended miracles, and revered the outward show of religion which he displayed; particularly as their clergy, and not

* 1 Tim. iv. 2, 3.

they, were required to sacrifice favourite indulgences at his bidding.

Dunstan, however, could not assume authority to bring back the clergy to that bondage from which they had gradually been escaping, till he had become a personage of weight and importance in the eyes of both nobility and people. And here his powerful connections assisted him, by bringing him very early into notice at court; where his abilities and accomplishments were all employed in winning favour and admiration. It was at this time that, being invited by a lady to draw a pattern for her, from which to embroider a priest's robe, he carried his harp with him, and hung it upon a wall; but he had no sooner seated himself at his task, than the untouched harp was heard to sing an anthem, of the glories which await holy men. Now, as we cannot suppose that God would work a miracle to give honour to an ambitious youth, employed on vanities, fraud must have been used in this case. And it is not difficult to guess how Dunstan imposed on the women, who ran out of the house in terror before many notes were sounded. We know there is an art that modern jugglers frequently acquire, which enables ventriloquists, as they are then named, to make the sound of their voice appear to come from any object between them and an opposite wall. And Dunstan, holding down his head as if intent on the pattern he was sketching, took, thereby, the very position which best suits the ventriloquist's purpose.

Later in life we shall find him making a more wicked use of this secret art. The instance just given was a mere boy's trick; for he was no more, in age. But he had applied it to an ambitious purpose. The general ignorance of his countrymen made them very liable to be imposed upon by a person whose education had extended to branches of knowledge then seldom acquired; it seems, how-

ever, as if they felt it to be indecent to believe, that heaven had interfered to gratify the winning young courtier, and the ladies at their embroidery, with music. He was, consequently, dismissed from the king's presence, under the suspicion of dealing with Satan; instead of gaining credit at court for a miracle.

Till now Dunstan had thought of marriage; and, as he was, very improperly, already admitted into holy orders, he must have aspired to holding ecclesiastical preferment as a married man. But, in the Saxon church, the bishoprics were still reserved for the unmarried; and, on a visit to his uncle, Elphege, bishop of Winchester, he was persuaded, after a strong and painful struggle between love and ambition, to determine on a life of celibacy. As soon as this resolution was made, he took the steps best suited to attract the public admiration by his excessive self-denial; and imposed on himself different ostentatious kinds of mortification, with that energy which placed him foremost in whatever he undertook.

Our blessed Lord has said, *When ye fast be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.* This reward, the mistaken approbation of men, was the very object of Dunstan's desire; so he fixed upon a place where the privations, which he had made up his mind to undergo, might appear to numbers, who, knowing his rank, would particularly admire in him that *shew of wisdom*, which consists in such seeming *humility, and neglecting of the body*. He, therefore, returned to Glastonbury, and constructed a cell for himself on the outside of the church, and against the wall. It was more like the grave of a dead man, than the habitation of a living one; being only five feet long and two and a half broad; and not high enough to stand upright in;

but that he had sunk the floor of it, below the level of the church-yard, into the rock. The front was the door of entrance, and contained a window to let in the light and allow him to be seen. Having too active a mind to be idle, he employed himself, in this cell, in working on brass and iron. His nights, as he persuaded the wondering people, were passed in desperate contests with the devil; who, he said, took every possible shape to draw him out of his cell.

His object was speedily gained. Rich and poor, noble and simple, crowded to Glastonbury to wonder at the hypocrite's way of life, and hear the stories of the credulous towns-folk. A rich widow, allied to the royal family, took up her abode near the church, for the benefit of his conversation; and, the king coming to see her, Dunstan, if the account was not afterwards invented by his blind admirers, had the audacious wickedness to persuade her royal and noble guests, that the wine which they and their attendants drank in abundance, had been produced by his prayers from the contents of a small flask, miraculously made as inexhaustible as the widow of Sarepta's cruse.

Thus had this bad man given himself up to the father of lies, to work all kinds of deceit; and he was permitted to prosper in his sins, and advance to deeper guilt. The widow left him her property; and the king gave up to him an estate and mansion at Glastonbury, and made him abbot of the monastery. The estates thus put into his power were employed, with his private patrimony, in rebuilding his own abbey on a much handsomer scale, and in founding five others. In all these he introduced the Benedictine rule, which was a great favourite with archbishop Odo; and, by their joint influence, the headship of such other monasteries as fell vacant about this period, was, in most cases, given to monks formed under Dunstan's eye.

On Edmund's invitation, he quitted both his cell and monastery to become again a courtier. And when Edred became king, the ascendancy which Dunstan obtained over that sickly prince was such, that 'he entrusted to him the care of his treasures, his body, his soul, and his kingdom.' Such are the words of a monkish historian, who boasts, that Dunstan was, 'as it were king, or emperor over the king.'

Whilst he thus ruled the court, from which the more sagacious Athelstan had dismissed him in disgrace, the bishopric of Crediton, in Devonshire, became vacant; and the king desired his mother to join her influence with his in persuading Dunstan to accept it. But the bishopric was not a valuable one; and Dunstan told the queen that he could not think of leaving, in so infirm a state of health, a sovereign 'who looked up to him as a father, and had made him lord over his kingdom.'

The next day he informed Edred that the Apostles, Peter, Paul, and Andrew, had appeared to him in the night, and rebuked him for refusing the office of bishop; bidding him not to do so again. He added other particulars, which the king interpreted, as the wily Dunstan intended he should, to mean that the archbishopric of Canterbury was the post which he was thus warned not to refuse; and Odo was now advanced in years. The king, however, died before the archbishop; and Dunstan had the audacity to spread a report, by which he again claimed to have been honoured with one of those peculiar distinctions which his Saviour received from above—That, as he rode towards the palace, a voice from heaven told him, Edred slept in the Lord. Whilst *the people that stood by, and heard it, said, it thundered* *.

* Compare John xii. 29,

Edwy, who succeeded his uncle Edred, was the eldest son of king Edmund; and but sixteen years of age, when he ascended the throne. He was however married, either at his accession, or soon after, to Elgiva; a lady so nearly related to him, that the marriage was illegal, according to the rules laid down by the Romish church. These rules extend the degrees of relationship, to which marriage is forbidden, much farther than the law of God required, as dictated to Moses. And this extension was an instance of most crafty policy. For as the popes established these rules, they also claimed the power of dispensing with them. Hence, as the royal families of Europe very frequently intermarried, the pope had it constantly in his power to gratify these great personages, or bring them to terms of submission, by declaring their marriage valid or null, as suited his purpose.

On the day of Edwy's coronation, when the nobles and prelates were feasting in the hall, the young king quitted them before they chose to rise from table; and withdrew to the ladies' apartments. The haughty thanes were highly affronted at a step which had so much the air of telling them, it was fit they should be gone; and at Odo's suggestion Dunstan, and a relation of his, were desired to go and bring the king back, 'whether he would or no.' Dunstan had already been offended by Edwy's requiring an account of the treasures which Edred had left under his care; and he now accepted this rude commission to make the new king feel his power. They found their youthful prince with his wife and her mother; and the crown, as if in play, cast at his feet.

It was an unbecoming office for a priest to bid any one to return to a table, where the guests were drinking deep and growing violent. But Dunstan's conduct, when he had thus intruded on his sove-

reign's privacy, leaves little doubt, that the coarse licentiousness of the festival had infected the hypocritical hermit, and reduced him to a level with a drunken thape. He insulted the ladies with vulgar language, expressive of his considering the king as not legally married; and when Edwy refused to quit them, he roughly forced the crown upon his sovereign's head, and dragged him into the riotous hall.

Thus did Dunstan display himself openly in the character of one of those *false teachers*, whose marks St. Peter had so forcibly described. *Presumptuous, self-willed, not afraid to speak evil of dignities—they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time.* Such a priest it was Edwy's duty to remove from the care of the churches. And it was scarcely to be hoped that the young king could have so chastised a temper, that vindictive feelings for the gross personal insult he had received, should not mix themselves with the demands of justice. He deprived Dunstan of his honours and wealth; and condemned him to banishment. It is added, that before the vessel, which was conveying him to Flanders, had got three miles from its harbour, messengers arrived, who were to have deprived Dunstan of sight.

The power of a king, however, is no more than that of any other wealthy man; unless his people are disposed to obey him, either from personal respect, or from the influence of habits and laws, or from fear of the soldiery at his command. But Edwy was too young to have had any personal weight, unless he had been a second Alfred. The nobility thought him effeminate; the churchmen were irritated by Dunstan's banishment; both injured his character with the people. And the nation at large were less afraid of the laws than of that power, which the clergy were supposed to possess, over the future destiny of men's souls. As to the soldiers, they were none other than the people. Hence,

when archbishop Odo resolved to exert the authority of the church to separate Elgiva from her husband, under the pretext of their being too nearly related, the king found himself quite helpless.

Yet this marriage was not so obviously illegal as to have been regarded, even by bishops, as null and void from the first. If, therefore, the archbishop, after carefully and impartially considering the question, had felt it an imperative duty to declare the king's marriage illegal, it was a most unhappy error for Elgiva, but not her crime, to have thought it would be admitted as valid. But the truth is, that she was considered as having spirited up the king to resent and punish Dunstan's violence to them both; and his friends were bent on taking a terrible revenge. Hence the archbishop was not content with issuing a sentence which, by setting aside the marriage, deprived her, at once, of a husband and of royal rank. In the fierceness of his hatred he sent armed men to seize her in the palace, and brand her face with hot irons; that her beautiful countenance might be so disfigured as to excite, henceforward, disgust rather than love. After this act of unjustifiable cruelty, he had her put on board ship, and sent to Ireland, to pass the remainder of her days in banishment. But, before many months had elapsed, she found means to return to England; and was supposed to be on her way to rejoin the king. Report said, that as her wounds healed and her scars came away, she had recovered her beauty. Before, however, she had approached nearer than Gloucester, some persons in Odo's employ again seized her, and cut asunder the nerves and sinews of her legs, to disable her from travelling any further. She only survived this horrible treatment a few days.

Were the understandings of these men so darkened, that, whilst they believed any breach of the rules of the church a deadly sin, they thought

murder none, rebellion none? Such may, possibly, have been the case with many who gave themselves up to the guidance of Odo and Dunstan; having been deceived into a firm conviction that the latter was an especial favorite of heaven. But the heads of the party manifested so much cunning and worldly wisdom, that they must be considered, not as deluded, but as going on, to fill up the measure of their wickedness, with a full consciousness of their own guilt. They had now treated Edwy so harshly, and insultingly, that they did not dare to leave him to the chance of becoming powerful by gradually acquiring his subjects' respect. His younger brother, Edgar, therefore, then but thirteen years old, was put forward at the head of an insurrection. The Danish colonies in Northumbria and East Anglia were too restless not to be ready to join in any change; and the superstitious populace of Mercia blindly followed the hypocritical enemies of the king; so Edwy

A. D. 957. was soon deprived of all authority north of the Thames.

Dunstan now returned to England, and, joining the rebellious party, was nominated to the vacant bishopric of Worcester. Odo performed the ceremony of his consecration; but the by-standers were astonished to hear him go through the service in the terms employed at the creation of an archbishop of Canterbury. When asked whether he was not conscious of an error, Odo had the audacity to reply, that the Holy Spirit, and not his own will, had produced the words he had been heard to utter. The artful old man hoped by this fraud to secure for Dunstan the succession to the primacy. Shortly after Odo was summoned to appear before Him, who will render to every man according to his deeds. But Canterbury was still subject to Edwy; who, as might be expected, nominated a person of his own choice to the archbishopric.

In two years more Edwy was dead. The antient chronicles allude to his death as calamitous, but give no particulars.

Edgar was now, at the age of sixteen, undisputed king. He had been raised to power by Dunstan's party, and, as he reigned in subservience to them, the monkish historians have spoken of him as the greatest of the Saxon kings. But even from their partial account it appears, that the unnatural rebellion into which he was misled in his boyhood, was followed by no repentance. Being given up to follow the devices of his own heart, his private life was stained with frightful sins; and his public, though guided by counsellors not deficient in worldly wisdom, was conspicuously marked by pride and ostentation. His fears of future punishment might have withheld him from the commission of some offences, but that they were quieted by his submission to penance, when commanded; and by his activity in persecuting the married clergy, and in establishing the Benedictine rule in a great number of monasteries.

Dunstan, throwing off that affectation of self-denial, which he had exhibited when he wished to make a reputation, got himself made bishop of London, and kept the see of Worcester with it; till Edwy's archbishop, a meek man, was persuaded, or terrified, into yielding up to him Canterbury.

He surrounded the king with prelates of his own choice; but the ecclesiastical rules, compiled in this reign, afford disgraceful evidence of their and his ignorance of that religion of which they were the appointed guardians. In these rules every sin has its price. Some could not be compensated, however, but by fasting on bread and water for ten years, or by a more painful penance for seven. But whoever might think his health likely to be injured by fasting, was informed, by the same rules, that a year's fast might be redeemed by a payment of

thirty shillings. And if any great man could find so many other persons to fast and perform penance with him for three days, that the whole number of days observed, reckoning each individual's time separately, should amount to seven years, he was entitled to the same advantages, or forgiveness, as though he had himself submitted for seven whole years to the enjoined mortifications.

Thus, instead of preaching the free mercy offered by Christ, these false teachers put such a yoke upon the neck of the poor man, as he must have been unable to bear. Whilst the rich were taught that their money might purchase exemption from the punishment due to sin, and make the sinner's peace with heaven. Surely an evil spirit was here at work, devising to throw contempt on their Lord's words; who had declared, that he came to publish good tidings to the poor, but warned the rich of this world, that they must expect to find peculiar difficulties opposing their entrance into his kingdom.

With such guides to lead him we cannot wonder that Edgar paid little attention to the divine laws; whenever they interfered with his passions; for he had wealth enough to redeem the penalties affixed to every sin in their list. It would be but unprofitable to dwell on his personal vices; but one of them connected him inseparably with Elfrida, a woman of whose wickedness history cannot be silent. She was the daughter of Ordgar, the earl of Devonshire; and the king, having heard of her beauty, sent Athelwold, a favourite courtier, to visit her, and bring him word whether report spoke true of her personal charms. Athelwold went, and became enamoured with her beauty; but told the king that it had been unreasonably exaggerated; and then, withdrawing from court, he married her himself. Such a deception could not long remain undetected. When the truth reached Edgar's ears, he sent word to Athelwold that he would visit him,

to witness the domestic happiness of his friend. Alarmed at the probable consequences of the detection of his treachery, Athelwold besought his wife to stain her face, and attire herself in the most disadvantageous manner. But her ambition made her indignant at the falsehood which had prevented her from ascending a throne; and, when the king arrived, she stepped forth from her chamber, arrayed with every ornament which could set off the beauty of her person. *She flattered their royal guest with her words; and forgot the covenant which she had made with her husband in the presence of her God.* And Edgar found it too true, that the way to *her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.* For *strong men were slain because of her.* Athelwold was soon after found murdered in a wood; and he *who killed, also took possession.* Elfrida became Edgar's wife. A. D. 965.

But though incapable of teaching spiritual things aright, the worldly prudence of Edgar's counsellors appeared in the protection given to foreign traders, the improvement of the coin, and the maintenance of a numerous fleet to protect the shores. His power was, in consequence, respected and feared by the petty kings of small districts in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. Eight of these obeyed his summons to attend him at Chester, and do him homage; but his pride was not content with this usual mark of deference from princes, who acknowledge a superior. Ascending his barge, he stationed himself at the helm, whilst they were required to take the watermen's seats, and row him down the Dee. His authority over the Welsh princes was turned to a better purpose, when he demanded an annual tribute of 300 wolves' heads; for this requisition cleared the country of those mischievous animals in about four years. And his pride was less offensively shown, though not less conspicuous, in prefixing to his charters pompous and boastful titles, which

sometimes occupy eighteen lines. They form a striking contrast to Alfred's modest style, 'I, the West-Saxon's king!'

At the early age of thirty-two Edgar died; leaving a son Ethelred, by Elfrida; and another, Edward, older, by a former wife.

Whatever had been Edgar's vices, he not only endeavoured to make up for them, as has been stated, by zealously supporting the papal regulations, which forbade marriage; but also by founding several new monasteries; and by enacting that every householder, who should neglect to pay his annual Romescot, or tax of a penny* to the pope, before St. Peter's day, must himself carry it and thirty more to Rome; and must bring back a certificate thereof, besides forfeiting 120 shillings to the king.

In return for this submission to churchmen, and attention to their worldly interests, the body of this poor sinner was actually honoured, some years after his death, with that worship which Roman Catholics offer to the remains of those whom their church names saints. The like reverence was, in due time, paid to Dunstan, for service of the same kind, done to the cause of popery. Thus did the Romish clergy *justify the wicked for a reward*; being either ignorant, or regardless, of the awful threatening of God against those, who thus *pervert judgment*.—*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossoms shall go up as dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel†.*

* To judge of the weight of this tax, it must be remembered, that a penny was a quarter of the price of a ram, see. p. 188.

† Isa. v. 20, 24.

On Edgar's death the governor of Mercia turned the monks out of all the monasteries within his jurisdiction. The friends of the married clergy came forward openly and powerfully, and the ambitious Elfrida endeavoured, by promising them her warm support, to procure, through their interest, the election of her son, Ethelred, in preference to his elder brother. The question was warmly debated in the witenagemot; but archbishop Dunstan, taking prince Edward by the hand, proceeded to crown him, whilst the nobles were disputing. As the king was only thirteen years old, his authority was, necessarily, in the entire disposal of the leading persons of that party which had raised, and then supported him on the throne. But when Dunstan began to make use of the power and influence, which he thus enjoyed, to deprive the married clergy of all the preferment still held by them, the families threatened, by his proceedings, with poverty, raised such a clamour as occasioned the convening of a national council. It was held in the refectory of Hyde Abbey, near Winchester. The archbishop, attending in person, brought the king with him; and they took their seats under a crucifix, placed in a niche of the wall. The outcry against Dunstan's severity was general; and he was loudly urged to restore to the married men their benefices. But when the assembly expected his reply, he looked down, as if hesitating what answer to give. At this moment the persons near the king heard a voice, issuing, as they imagined, from the crucifix, and saying, Let it not be done—let it not be done. On this they shouted out, a miracle. And the petitioners for redress could gain no further hearing.

The voice heard, doubtless, came from Dunstan's own mouth. And the deception, by which it was made to sound as if it issued from the crucifix, was but another instance of the same art by which he

had made the harp on the wall to sing. His imposition, however, was more successful now; because, by a long course of hypocrisy and cunning, he had prepared the credulous to expect miraculous interference in behalf of any cause which he might espouse.

The objects of Dunstan's persecution were, nevertheless, convinced that deceit had been practised; though unable to detect it. They refused to believe, that their Saviour had miraculously spoken to support a bad man in his tyranny. And when time had been afforded for cool reflection, similar suspicions appear to have been felt by many; who, at the last council, had suffered themselves to be carried away by the impressions of momentary surprise. Hence it was agreed, that the question

A.D. 978. should be again and fully debated in another council, summoned to meet at Calne. On this occasion the cause of the married clergy was ably pleaded by a Scottish prelate, named, Beornhelm; who had been invited to attend, for the purpose; and whose presence makes it probable, that *forbidding to marry* was an abuse not then held to be indispensable by his church.

But the heart of Dunstan was, by this time, so hardened, that he could prepare a murder, and look his victims steadfastly in the face. He had kept the king away, as too young to be present at such a debate; though three years older than when he attended at Winchester. It had also been contrived, that the council should be held in an upper chamber; and when Dunstan perceived the effect which Beornhelm's arguments were producing, he replied in a severe tone—'I am now too old to play the orator, and defend myself against calumnies long past. Yet, I confess, I do not like to be conquered. To Christ, the judge, I therefore commit the cause of his church.' These words probably served as some secret agent. In the next minute

the floor gave way beneath his opponents. Many of them were killed, and more grievously wounded, by the fall and the crashing of broken beams ; whilst the other end of the apartment, at which the archbishop and his adherents had taken their seats, held firm. In the words of the Psalmist, Dunstan had *travailed with iniquity, and conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He had made a pit, and digged it.* And yet, to human eyes, his cunning had saved him from falling into the destruction he had prepared for others. But sentence had been given against such an offender, by Him who saith nothing in vain. *His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings shall come down upon his own pate* *. And though Dunstan might, now, triumph over those who had opposed him ; and though he appeared to men, to be marked out by miracles, as the especial favourite of heaven ; yet, if his conscience told him how rank was his offence, and that he must give an account before that Judge to whom he had so impiously appealed, and who seeth in secret, then was his punishment already begun. For his peace of mind must assuredly have departed from him, never to return. But if he had been *doing the deeds* of him, who *was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth* ;—and if, he *contemned God ; and said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it*, would his case be the less unhappy, for his having arrived at this last stage in the awful progress of guilt ? Alas ! He, who *is love*, and whose mercy is infinite, has suffered His conduct towards such hardened transgressors, to be likened to that of one, who *beholdeth iniquity and spite, to requite it with his own hand* †.

When he who should have pressed the duties of religion on the princes of the land, was so far gone

* Psalm vii. 14, 15.

† Ibid. x. 14.

in wickedness, we cannot wonder that his age was fertile in crimes, dreadful as his own.

A. D. King Edward was not yet a man, when the
978. conclusion of a long chase happened to bring him within sight of the lofty towers of Corfe Castle, the residence of Elfrida. Some of his companions were left behind, some were engaged in calling the dogs together, and the young monarch rode on unattended, and unsuspecting, to make friendly enquiries after the health of Ethelred, and his mother. But when he reached the castle the day was waning, and he declined Elfrida's invitation to alight; yet thankfully accepted her offer of a refreshing draught, as he sat on horseback in the gate. No sooner, however, had he raised the cup to his lips, than one of Elfrida's attendants took advantage of the unguarded posture to stab him in the back. As he felt the blow he spurred his horse to escape; but the wound was mortal; he soon fell out of the saddle, and his feet hanging in the stirrups, his terrified steed dragged him a corpse into Wareham.

When his death was known within the castle, the boy Ethelred, who was but ten years of age, shed some natural tears for his brother's sufferings. But the wicked passions of Elfrida were wound up to such a pitch, that she no sooner perceived him weeping, than, considering his tears as a reproof of her cruelty, she seized a wax candle and beat him with such severity as to leave him half dead. Ever after, as long as Ethelred lived, he shuddered at the sight of a candle, being unable to look at one without having the anguish and horror of that night forced back upon his recollection. Under such a mother he grew up spiritless and inactive. For whilst she chose to exercise the royal authority in his name, he could only escape suffering from her violence by entire submission to her will. Yet, ere long, the terrors of a guilty conscience made her

resign all the pomp and power which she had strived so deeply to obtain. In the unauthorised hope of making atonement in her own person for her sins, she became her own tormentor; retiring into a monastery, clothing herself in hair-cloth, sleeping on the hard floor, and submitting to every penance which superstition could suggest.

As for Dunstan, the dangerous enmity of Elfrida, and the opinion of his hypocrisy in which, he knew, the king had been framed up, were sufficient reasons to prevent his attempting the recovery of a prominent share in the administration of public affairs. He died in the tenth year of Ethelred's reign; and no marks of his repentance are recorded. On the contrary, if the monks, who wrote his history, have given an honest account of his last illness, he must have gone on, to the close of his life, plotting the most wicked deceptions. But it is difficult to say, whether he did thus impose upon them, or they intended to impose upon the world by falsehoods devoid of foundation. For they, as well as he, were of the number of those *evil men and seducers*, of whom it was foretold, they *shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived**.

CHAPTER VIII.

Conquest of England by the Danes.

HAD either the Saxon people, or clergy, sought, with earnestness, to know and obey God, the light thrown in upon the country during the few years of Alfred's reign, would have increased. The reading of the Scriptures was put within the

A.D.
988.

* 2 Tim. iii. 13.

reach of many, and might, by the help of translations, been so diffused that none should have been ignorant of the way of salvation. It is true that, as printing had not been invented, the labour and time consumed in copying out books with the pen made them much too expensive for every family to possess a Bible. But, on the other hand, the estates given to pious uses maintained a very numerous clergy, who might have carried with them their own copies of the Scriptures into every poor man's house, and thus have made the word of life known to every family. Unhappily, this knowledge was not coveted. The clergy themselves never attained to it; and thick darkness overspread the land.

Wisdom had begun to utter her voice in the streets, and her words in the city. But the simple ones had loved simplicity; and the fools had hated knowledge. And the result was as if God had spoken at this time, what He has indeed announced for the instruction of every age—Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them; and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. All ranks had followed their own devices; till it was plainly seen that they were only evil continually. The blessings of prosperity, foolishly employed, had spread luxury and drunkenness over the land, till the corrupt nobility were more ready to betray their native country for a bribe, than to struggle manfully against its invaders. And it had pleased the Almighty to make Elfrida's wickedness instrumental in afflicting the people with a king so slothful, that he obtained the name of Ethelred the Unready; so easily enticed by sinners, that he entrusted one weak or wicked flatterer after another with the defence of the country in

times of great difficulty; and so simple, as to strip his kingdom of its resources, to pour treasures into the hands of pirates, who came to spoil it. Thus at once encouraging and enabling them to fit out larger fleets, and allure more numerous followers to join them in repeating their robberies.

Ethelred was about twenty-three years of age, when the Danes landed with a considerable force in Suffolk. And they had no sooner defeated the first army, hastily collected to oppose them, than the king, in terror, paid down 10,000*l.* to induce them to withdraw. Conscious, however, that this easily acquired booty would but encourage them to come again, and ask for more, the Londoners built a fleet; and it was manned and fitted out at a heavy expence. But Ethelred gave the command of this armament to Alfric, duke of Mercia; a man whose disloyalty he had, only a few years before, discovered and punished; but whose flatteries had restored him to favour. This traitor joined the Danes with part of his fleet; and then helped them to defeat the other part of it.

Two years after Swayne, king of Denmark, invaded England in person. After pillaging the coasts from Suffolk to Dorset, he, and an army of less than 10,000 men, frightened Ethelred and his ministers into giving them 16,000*l.* to abstain from farther violence. The next time the invaders raised their demands to 24,000*l.* When money was so scarce that an ox would only fetch thirty-pence, the sums which Ethelred thus took from his subjects, at the bidding of their enemies, could not have been levied without great difficulty. Indeed they occasioned the first establishment of a lasting and oppressive tax, named Dane-gelt. But the wickedness which both king and people now joined in perpetrating, brought upon the nation, very shortly, far more burthensome penalties and wider ruin.

The Danish fleets had withdrawn with their spoil; and Gunhilda, the sister of Swayne, having married an English earl, and embraced Christianity, remained in the country as a pledge, that her brother was now sincere in his intentions to keep the promised peace. But Ethelred's advisers persuaded their master, that the Danish families settled in England, though most of them had been here for some generations, were ever inviting their countrymen to invade it; and that, consequently, the invasions would never cease till such traitorous subjects were utterly cut off. In the folly to which these wicked counsellors were justly given up, they thought that Swayne and his subjects, a brave, hardy, and merciless people, would be more influenced by the fear of revisiting a land where so many of their countrymen had perished, than by thirst for vengeance. Such arrangements, therefore, were made, that on the 12th of November, being the eve of the festival of St. Brice, all Saxon governors and officers received letters in Ethelred's name, bidding them employ the next day in massacring every Dane within their power, male or female, young or old. The populace had but too many grounds for disliking the nation thus devoted to slaughter; wherefore, though the day assigned for this bloody deed, was one which their superstition taught them to consider as a holy day, they greedily joined in the work of destruction, sharing the guilt of their rulers, and bringing down upon their country the fearful anger of Him, who has declared, that *the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of those who shed it* *.

Edric, then Ethelred's favourite minister, had given a special command, that Gunhilda should not escape. He was obeyed by wretches, who added the cruelty of putting her husband and child

* Numb. xxxv. 34.

to death before her eyes. The people with whom she had intended to unite herself, by becoming nominally a Christian, knew too little of the spirit of Christianity to teach her to pray for her murderers. Their example was the very reverse of such heavenly-mindedness. She thought but of vengeance; and foretold that her brother would exact it rigorously.

He came; and Ethelred, alternately betrayed by his officers, and ruined by his own folly, A.D. 1013. fled from England, after the country had been exhausted by forced tributes to the Danes, and desolated by twelve years of murderous warfare.

The crown was thus left to Swayne; but he dying the following year, the Danish soldiers placed his son Canute in the vacant throne. Rather, however, than submit to their yoke, the English were still disposed to prefer their own countryman, Ethelred, on his promising amendment.

The spiritless king had found protection in Normandy; to the sister of whose duke, Richard, he had been some time married. The connection had not procured him friends, as he had used Emma, the Norman princess, ill. But his son Edmund, surnamed Ironside, was already grown up; and the frankness and bravery of this young man made the cause of his family popular with the warlike people whose assistance he now besought. The reputation of the Saxon prince was equally useful to his father in England; and by Edmund's exertions, and the help of those allies whom his influence procured, Ethelred was again seated on his throne; though Edric betrayed his master, and went over to Canute with forty ships.

Ethelred survived his restoration but for a short time; yet he had nearly lost the kingdom again. At his death Edmund was besieged in London; but, escaping from Edmund Ironside, king, A.D. 1016. thence, he raised such a force as enabled

him to meet and contend with Canute in three battles, fought with the most desperate courage.

The continuance of war was the continuance of misery, and of uncontrolled rapine. The country was one continued scene of desolation; and the two ambitious young princes were constrained to come to a compromise; by which it was settled, that Canute should rule the north, and Edmund Ironside the south, of England. Scarcely, however, could Edmund have dismissed his military followers to their homes, before he perished by the treachery of the infamous Edric.

His death left Canute without a rival
 Canute, king, capable of disputing with him the pos-
 A. D. 1016. session of England. Edmund, indeed, had left children, but they were quickly sent out of the kingdom; whilst Edwig, a popular brother of the late king, was first banished, and afterwards assassinated by his servants, whom Canute had bribed. Edward and Alfred, the sons of Ethelred by Emma, were still with their mother in Normandy; and their uncle Richard seemed disposed to assist them in claiming the English throne. But Canute put a stop to opposition from this quarter, by asking the duke's widowed sister in marriage; and Emma became the wife of the oppressor of her former husband's family. With the same policy Canute offered favourable terms to the nobles who had hitherto remained faithful to their native sovereigns; though, after they had submitted, he put three of them to death, without any plausible pretext.

When Edric saw these men suffer, he hoped to be raised as high under the new monarch for his treasons, as his flatterers had elevated him under the weak Ethelred. But though Canute had probably encouraged Edric's crime, and had greedily reaped the fruits of it, he despised the criminal. For a time, indeed, he confirmed him in the go-

vernment of Mercia. But when, at a feast held in London, Edric boasted to the king of the importance of his services, Canute, turning to a Norwegian chieftain, said, 'Then let him receive his deserts; that he betray not us, as he betrayed Ethelred and Edmund in their turn.' The Norwegian instantly cut the traitor down with his battle-axe; and the body of Edric was thrown out of a window into the Thames. The punishment was deserved; but the king, who thus condemned treachery, had been the tempter.

Vile as Edric was, it was not the love of justice which led Canute to rid himself of him thus. It was the effect of Satan's most hideous work upon fallen man. He makes our pride revolt at being reminded of past benefits; till deep hatred springs up and is cherished, where unperverted nature would have rejoiced in listening to the claims of gratitude; as links to unite fellow-creatures in the delightful bonds of benevolence and love. That Canute's proud heart had given to this horrible temptation the most full command over him is too evident from another instance of its pernicious influence. He was by inheritance king of Denmark; and, having conquered England, he was a discontented man till he had added Sweden and Norway to his possessions; but the Swedes fought bravely in defence of their native land; and, in a battle with them, Canute would have perished, had it not been for the courage and fidelity of Ulfr; who rescued him from an overwhelming number of foes. Not long after, the king quarrelled with this chieftain, amidst the gaming and uproar of a feast. The insulted noble was prudently retiring, when he saw that his sovereign had lost his temper; but Canute taunted him for this as a coward. 'Was I a coward,' replied Ulfr, 'when I rescued you from the fangs of the Swedish dogs?' Instead of being recalled to a sense of gratitude, Canute's pride

writhed under this just reproof; and in the calm hours of night his angry passions rankled unsubdued. When he arose the next day, he demanded Ulfr's blood; as though by this crime he could wipe away the debt, which he felt it a torture to owe. And as if to show distinctly to mankind how far the wickedness thus conceived in the heart may hurry the unhappy sinner, the man who had freely exposed his life to save Canute, was stabbed, by Canute's order, in a church.

Such are the dreadful effects of pride, when they expose themselves openly to view, unchecked by the fear of man. Yet Canute was not of a peculiarly malignant temper; nor was he one of those persons who give way to every evil passion. His judgment was sound; and his ordinary government was conducted with great prudence. He had the good sense to perceive that the nations whom he had subdued would be most easily kept in subjection by making them feel, that their condition was happier than it had been before. He, therefore, laboured to improve the laws, and enforce obedience to them; he distributed impartial justice between his fellow-countrymen, the Danes, and the people they had assisted him to conquer; and, after he had got possession of the country, he kept out all other invaders. Hence, his reign was popular in England, his favourite residence; and he had even the skill to gain applause by his conduct, when, once more, his hands were dipped in blood. Having killed one of his own guards, he called the comrades of the deceased together, and, descending from his throne, bade them pronounce judgment upon him. But when respect for their king kept them silent, Canute sentenced himself to pay nine times the fine which the Saxon law would have imposed, on any other person, for manslaughter.

On another occasion he gave a public lesson of a striking nature to the flatterers of his court. They

had spoken as if nothing dare dispute his commands, and, affecting to believe them, he ordered a chair to be placed before the waves of a rising tide; and bade the sea abstain from wetting his feet. When the waters dashed against him, he turned to his attendants, and desired them, henceforward, to remember, that he was but the servant of that Sovereign Lord, whom the ocean, the earth, and the heavens obey.

Canute was too proud a man to be playing the hypocrite in this scene. He, no doubt, felt the truth of what he spake, but whilst his strong sense taught him to believe that there is a God, and enabled him to form some notion of the infinite inferiority of man to his Creator, his vigorous understanding could not *create in him a clean heart, nor renew a right spirit within him*. Natural wisdom may so far get the victory over the passions, as to prevent most outward acts of sin; but it cannot heal the wickedness of the heart. The Lord has reserved to himself to give, to every earnest suppliant's prayer, that spiritual wisdom which sanctifies the soul; that all, who sincerely seek, may receive from Him this chief of blessings; which makes every inequality of earthly condition, or of bodily, or mental powers, lighter than dust in the balance.

Canute's unassisted reflections on the divine nature could not take such a commanding hold of his heart, as to make him *love God with all his soul, and all his mind, and all his strength*; and to loathe and abhor sin, as offensive and insulting to that good Being, on whom his strongest affections were fixed. But, believing that he had an Almighty Master, whose laws he had disobeyed, he was led by this reflection to fear God, much after the same manner as one of his subjects would fear an earthly judge. Like a criminal, who thinks he has but little chance of escaping detection, he felt it prudent to abstain henceforward from outward acts of

sin; and he became anxious so to conduct himself, as to escape the punishment due to his past crimes. For farther light, on this last subject particularly, he would naturally look to the Saxon clergy of England, the most civilized part of his dominions. Unhappily, they had so far lost sight of the truth, as to imagine that the gates of heaven were wholly in St. Peter's charge, and that *he*, and other departed saints, would lend a more willing ear to a suppliant sinner's prayer, than that Saviour, who *so loved the world*, that he gave up his life on the cross to reconcile penitent offenders to their God. They taught, too, that these intercessors might be won over by liberal gifts to their favourite shrines. Now Canute had got together abundant wealth by his conquests, and by the widely extended system of robbery which accompanied all warfare in those days. He determined, therefore, to spare no expense in buying the forgiveness of his sins; for he felt that no employment of his money could bring him more satisfaction, than spending it so as to quiet the terrors of his heavily burdened conscience. He accordingly went on a pilgrimage to Rome; and astonished and delighted the interested clergy of the countries through which he passed, by the profusion with which he distributed his treasures, wherever he found the image of some Romish saint, blindly supposed to have power to dissuade the Just and Holy One from taking vengeance for sin. Canute knew that the influence of distinguished applicants would have led him to mitigate the sentence which his laws denounced against any offender; and he also knew, that the sentence which those laws enjoined might often be changed with great propriety, because human laws cannot be so framed as to suit every case. But the law by which God judges offenders is perfect. In His decisions not only every action, but every motive of the offender is weighed; and with what His justice re-

quires no partiality can interfere. Neither was it by such intercession as would leave the laws of God broken, and make their authority of none effect, that our Redeemer purchased forgiveness for those who humbly ask it in His name; but by taking upon Himself the punishment due for disobedience to his Father's just commands. *By his stripes we are healed* *. Thus it was that *righteousness and peace*, in the language of the Psalmist, *kissed each other*; that man found peace whilst the honour of God's righteous law was maintained. In leaning, therefore, on the intercession of those who had made no atonement for his guilt, Canute truly leaned on a broken reed.

As might naturally be expected, he learned to think lightly of offences, for which his blind guides had induced him to believe expiation might so easily be made. The letter which he wrote from Rome to the heads of the English clergy, is altogether in the language of a self-satisfied man, who thought he had now made all things even between himself and his insulted Maker.

His sincere desire, however, to abstain from farther offences against the divine laws, was very favourable to the happiness of his subjects. And they who had suffered from the misrule and weakness of Ethelred's government, must have sincerely applauded Canute's administration; and had reason to lament his dying in the prime of A. D.
1035. life.

* 1 Pet. ii. 24.

CHAPTER IX.

Reigns of the Danish and Saxon successors of Canute, until the Norman conquest.

HAROLD, Canute's second son, surnamed, from his speed in running, Hare-foot, succeeded to the throne; notwithstanding the opposition of Earl Godwin, of whose singular rise and power it is proper now to speak.

At the close of one of Canute's battles with Edmund Ironside, the brave Ulfr followed up the pursuit of his opponents so eagerly that, having entered a forest at their heels, he was unable to find his way out again, when he wished to rejoin the Danish camp. Night came upon him whilst he was still bewildered amongst the thickets. In the morning he tried different paths, till one brought him where he met a youth driving cattle to their pasture. Ulfr asked his name; and was answered, Godwin. He then requested the young man to tell him how he might find his way to his comrades; and was told, in reply, that he had strayed very far from the outlet by which he must quit the forest; that Canute's army was rapidly retreating; that the peasantry were on the look out to cut off all stragglers, and that if an unarmed youth like himself were to be detected in assisting the escape of a Dane, he would certainly be killed.

Aware of his danger, Ulfr drew a gold ring from his finger, and offered it to Godwin; on the condition of becoming his guide. Humble as was the situation of the youth, to whom this offer was made, he had already felt the temptations of ambition. He was related to Edric, whose low origin had not prevented his being put, though most unworthily, into the highest offices of the state. And Godwin

had listened to accounts of the worldly greatness which surrounded his relation, without being shocked at what he must have also heard of Edric's crimes, and with no reluctance to being himself exposed to be tempted to the like wickedness. At the sight of Ulfr's ring, he perceived that the person, who asked his assistance, must be of high rank; and he saw the opportunity of doing such a service in a moment of need, as might well procure for himself a far more important reward, than was at present offered. 'I will not take your ring,' said he, 'but will try to conduct you to your friends. If I succeed, repay me as you please.'

He led Ulfr to his father's house, where the Jarl was respectfully received and fed. There they waited till it was again dark, when the old husbandman brought to the door two horses, ready saddled; and, wishing Ulfr a safe journey, said, 'I commit to you my only son. After having preserved you, he cannot return to dwell here again in safety. If you have any interest with your king, get my son placed amongst his attendants.' So that Godwin might be put within reach of the favours of a court, it was alike indifferent to his father and himself whether he was serving the friends or the cruellest enemies of his native country.

They travelled all night; and the next day reached Canute's camp. Ulfr was then in favour; the king rejoiced to see him safe; and he spoke warmly of the service rendered him by his young companion, whom he had found a bold, cheerful, and prudent guide. Godwin was ordered into Canute's presence. He was a handsome youth; desiring the favour of the world more than he feared to commit sin; and he had his reward. The honours of the world were freely showered upon him. He rapidly advanced in greatness, and in guilt. Ulfr gave him his sister in marriage. Canute entrusted him with important commands, raising him

to the dignity of a Jarl, or Earl; and in the new reign he distinguished himself by treachery and murders of such atrocity, as even that barbarous age spoke of with horror.

Canute had left three sons; Swayne and Harold by the daughter of a Danish Jarl; and Hardicanute by his wife Emma, the widow of Ethelred. He had given to Swayne the government of Norway; and he had wished that Harold should succeed to the English, and Hardicanute to the Danish crown. But the Saxons were disposed to prefer Hardicanute, as connected, through his mother, with the line of their native princes; and earl Godwin joined this party, thinking that a mere boy, if raised to the throne by his influence, must submit to govern at his will. Harold, however, prevailed. Godwin soon deserted the weaker for the stronger side; and Hardicanute withdrew to Denmark.

But, though no longer openly opposed at home, Harold still felt that his throne was not secure whilst Alfred and Edward, sons of Emma by Ethelred, could form hopes of recovering their father's kingdom. He knew that, being Saxons by birth, they were, in consequence, regarded with affection by the great majority of his subjects; and their powerful uncle, the duke of Normandy, under whose protection they lived, had shown himself disposed to support their pretensions.

To get these youths, therefore, into his possession, a forged letter was sent from England, which induced Alfred to cross the sea with about 600 followers. Earl Godwin met him on the shore; pretending to be his zealous friend, and binding himself by solemn oaths, to conduct the young prince to his mother. They travelled together to Guildford, where Alfred's companions, and some brave Norman friends, were separated from him to share the feasts provided, in different houses, for their reception. As evening came on they were

tempted to drink profusely; and being thus put off their guard, they were seized by their cowardly enemies, as they were retiring to rest; their hands were bound behind them; and, every tenth man being marked off, to be set at liberty and carry the dreadful tale away to terrify Edward, who was a timid prince, a few of the rest were reserved as slaves, but the greater part were put to death, with such circumstances of horrible cruelty, as historians have shuddered to record.

Alfred himself was stripped of his cloathes; and, being placed upon a sorry horse, with his feet tied under its belly, was led half across England, exposed to pain and insults, before he perished under the farther tortures to which he was sentenced.

By the prominent share Godwin had taken in seducing this young prince to his destruction, he had hoped to earn the lasting friendship of his sovereign. But of these wages of sin he was disappointed; for Harold's reign lasted only four years.

His early death made way, without farther opposition, for Hardicanute; who was ^{A.D.} _{1040.} immediately invited to England, and arrived with a strongly manned Danish fleet of sixty-two ships.

As he was half-brother to Alfred, he came bent on revenging that prince's cruel death; but, by his conduct to Harold's corpse, he proved that the ferocity of his own disposition was not less than that which he condemned; for he caused it to be dug up, the head severed from the body, and thrown into the Thames. Earl Godwin was alive; and his punishment would have been an act of justice. But he bribed his angry sovereign to overlook his crime; by presenting him with a vessel profusely gilt, and carrying eighty warriors splendidly armed, and each decorated with two golden bracelets, weighing sixteen ounces.

To pay the chosen body of mariners and troops,

which had attended him from Denmark, Hardicanute imposed so heavy a tax upon his new subjects, that the people rose upon the collectors in Worcestershire, and put two of them to death. Enraged at this, the king marched an army thither; and, making no distinction between the innocent and the offenders, he gave up the county for four days to indiscriminate pillage, and on the fifth reduced Worcester to ashes.

Emma alone seemed to possess any influence over her ferocious son. Her complaints had led him to take up Alfred's cause so outrageously against Harold, who was equally his brother; and at her suggestion, he invited over her surviving son Edward, and treated him with kindness.

But, when a long reign of peculiar violence seemed to threaten England, this boisterous savage was cut off, like another Belshazzar, in the midst of thoughtless revelry. Whilst he stood up at a feast, *overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*, and grasping a large cup to empty it a draught, *the day of the Lord came upon him unawares*. He fell in horrid convulsions, and never spoke more.

Hardicanute left no children; and the succession to the throne of Denmark being disputed, there was no immediate claimant for the English crown from that quarter. On the other hand, Edward, the son of Ethelred, was on the spot; and Godwin, having observed his weak and irresolute character, thought such a king would be incapable of checking, and might be blindly led to promote, his ambitious views for the farther aggrandizement of his family. He therefore offered to replace Edward on the throne of his father, provided he would promise him a lasting friendship; would marry the earl's daughter, Edith; and would continue her brothers in the high commands, which they already held. To these conditions Edward readily assented. The English nation gladly hailed a king of their own

race; and the crown passed back from the Danish to the Saxon line, without a drop of blood being shed to bring about this change.

But Canute's occasional absences from England, and the difficulty of keeping a recently conquered people in subjection, had obliged him to place very extensive powers in the hands of a few chieftains, who possessed his confidence; and, under the unsettled and violent government of his sons, these great officers were naturally led to seek for security, by strengthening themselves so as to become nearly independent of the sovereign. Hence Edward, though he gained a crown, scarcely possessed a kingdom. Siward, Earl of Northumberland, governed the whole of the country ruled by its ancient kings. Leofric, Earl of Leicester, possessed the like authority over the northern parts of Mercia; whilst Swayne, son of Godwin, commanded its southern counties. Godwin himself was governor of Wessex, Sussex, and Kent; and Harold, another of his sons, held, in like manner, the former kingdoms of Essex and East Anglia. These governors possessed little short of royal power within their respective provinces; but their earldoms were not yet considered as hereditary, and they might be removed from their high offices by order of the king and witenagemot; though they rarely submitted to such an order, without raising a rebellion to resist it.

The first contest in which Edward was engaged with these great officers, originated in A. D.
1051. a quarrel between some dependants of Godwin and the servants of the Count of Boulogne, who had married the king's sister. The Count pressed his royal brother-in-law to punish the insolence of his subjects; whilst Godwin and his sons raised an army to compel the king to surrender the Count and his followers to their vengeance. The cause taken up by the Godwins was popular; but

they themselves were much more dreaded than loved. And though the Saxons, about Edward's court, were irritated by the preference which he showed for the society of the foreign friends of his youth, the Earls Siward and Leofric were more sensible of their danger from the grasping ambition of Godwin and his sons, than concerned whether a Norman or a Saxon courtier received the larger share of the royal smiles. At the king's summons, therefore, they marched with a large force to his assistance; and, the two parties perceiving their strength to be nearly equal, it was agreed to call together a *witena-gemot*, in which all grievances might be considered. This assembly accordingly met; but some recent atrocities, committed by Swayne, disposed it to begin its proceedings by declaring him an outlaw. On this Godwin and Harold quitted England, rather than abide the decision of a council so little favourable to their family.

Whilst alarmed for the result of this struggle, Edward had solicited the assistance of his cousin, William, Duke of Normandy, afterwards the Conqueror, who coming with a powerful fleet, though too late to be of use, was received by the king as a most welcome visitor, and laden with gifts on his departure.

Earl Godwin, however, had only withdrawn to employ the treasures, which he took with him, in collecting such a force as might enable him, on his return, to bear down all opposition. He and his sons re-appeared with their united fleets off those downs, which have since been called the Godwin sands; from which anchorage they sailed together up the Thames. The Norman favourites fled in their turn, whilst Godwin and Harold recovered possession of their honors, and placed two of their family in the King's power, as pledges for their good behaviour. Had these hostages remained in

England, they might have compelled the King to set them at liberty whenever they chose; but he sent them abroad to the Duke of Normandy, to enable him to stipulate with the Godwins for the safety of any of Edward's Norman friends, who might fall into their power.

By this last step, though not an imprudent one, the King in reality confessed his want of authority over this ambitious subject. But the unhappy Earl was now doomed to find, that there is a King whose justice cannot be overpowered. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* But though God endure with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction; yet it was said of Him long ago, that *when the wicked man, the oppressor, is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of His wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating* *. And never were these words more remarkably fulfilled than in Earl Godwin's end. The murder of Alfred had been alluded to, at the King's table, and Godwin, conscious that the memory of that transaction rendered him odious, loudly protested his innocence of it. He at length went so far, as to call down upon himself the curse of God; wishing that, if he were guilty, he might not live to eat the morsel which he held in his hand. *Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God? He hath said in his heart, thou wilt not require it.* But this bold despiser of God's power was answered according to his awful prayer. He suddenly lost his speech, and fell from his seat. Harold and two other sons raised him from the ground, and carried him to the King's chamber; where he lingered in helpless and miserable agony from Monday to Thursday, and then expired.

A.D.
1053.

* Job ix. 23.

On Harold and his brothers this visible execution of God's judgment against sin produced but little effect. They probably resolved to be less wicked than their father; but He who requires to be served with the whole heart, cannot be expected to lend his aid to such selfish resolutions. On the King's heart the passing events of life were made to work happier results. He was a meek man, and one who feared the Lord. And God, who had not given him an enlarged understanding, to see through the errors in the religion of his age and country, appears to have favourably regarded the *willing mind*, and *accepted* his service *according to that which he had, and not according to that which he had not*; giving him grace to withstand many of the temptations to which his elevated rank exposed him, and to grow in piety and humility as he increased in years. Touched with pity for the sufferings of his people, from a severe famine, he ordered the money still levied under the title of Dane-gelt to be returned to the payers, and that this burdensome tax should thenceforward cease. By this rare act of kindness, and by the gentleness of his manners, he gained the affections of his people; and though they learned, from those who approached his person, that their King was not a wise man, they thought God's blessing attended on him, and in protecting him preserved them from the violence and desolation under which England had groaned during the two preceding generations. The oppressive rule soon after introduced by their foreign masters, the Normans, made the English look back to Edward's reign with a partiality which led to his merits being very much overvalued; so that the Popes gratified the national feelings by declaring him a saint, and giving him the religious title of Confessor. This name was ordinarily bestowed on such as had suffered persecutions short of martyrdom in consequence of openly *confessing* the truth

before infidels or heretics. To Edward, therefore, it was wholly misapplied; but monkish historians fixed the custom, and he is seldom spoken of, at this day, but as Edward the Confessor.

The peace of the country was however occasionally interrupted, as long as Edward lived, by the contests between Harold and the great earls of the north and west; but this petty warfare seemed to his subjects as nothing, when contrasted with the miseries which the old had witnessed and the young had heard of with horror.

As Edward's life was now approaching to its close, and he had neither sons nor brothers, he sent to Germany for his nephew Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside; who had fled thither from the pursuit of Canute, and married a relation of the Emperor. This long banished prince was received by the English with lively marks of joy; but he only reached England to die; and though he left a son, Edgar Atheling, the youth was of tender age, and of such weak capacity, that it seemed useless to settle on him a crown, which one of two powerful aspirants would quickly tear from his head. For it soon became evident, that Harold would not long be contented to remain a subject. And, on the other hand, the King's partiality for the Norman court, in which he had passed nearly thirty years of his life, and his gratitude for the valuable protection he then received from his uncle Duke Richard, had encouraged the present ambitious representative of that family to aspire to being named Edward's heir.

William, Duke of Normandy, was the illegitimate son of Rollo, by a tanner's daughter. They therefore who pride themselves on being sprung from our Norman kings, and care little how wicked their ancestors may have been, provided only they were amongst those whom the world calls great, must submit to reckon the list, of those on whose proud titles they exalt themselves, from a humble labourer

in a filthy occupation and his abandoned daughter. At the age of nine William was left an orphan, to govern the hardy and restless nobility, to whose command he was allowed to succeed. In this situation he was early trained to contend against difficulties; and became bold, and sagacious in all the crooked wisdom of the world. It may be remembered, that Edward had entrusted to his keeping two members of Godwin's family. These kinsmen Harold wished to recover, before he chose to appear openly as William's rival. He therefore obtained the King's leave to go and require them back, in his name. But when he reached the Duke's court, William, who saw into his views, insisted on Harold's pledging himself, by the most solemn oaths, to support his pretensions to the English crown. Finding himself in the Duke's power, Harold did not dare to refuse; but when he had carried his relations away, he reflected on this oath only to hate the Duke for having forced it upon him; and an event which soon after occurred increased his means of opposing William.

Duncan, King of Scotland, had been murdered and his throne usurped by Macbeth; whose crimes have been so forcibly set, by Shakespear, before the English reader. At Edward's command Siward, Earl of Northumberland, entered Scotland with Malcolm, Duncan's son, and slew the usurper. But Siward's eldest son perished in the contest; hence that Earl, dying soon after, left no child of age to apply for his succession; and his earldom was given to Tostig, son of Godwin. This for a time weakened Harold's power, by raising up a rival in his own family. For each brother was too ambitious to give way to the other. But Tostig's violence, and his extortions, so irritated the Northumbrians, that they drove him out of their country; and petitioned that Morcar, the brother of Harold's wife, might be appointed their earl.

Harold induced the King to grant them their choice; and thus the command of all the north of England was placed in the hands of a person willing to move at Harold's beck.

Scarcely had this arrangement been made, when Edward died; having been king of Eng-
land twenty-four years. At this time Harold was the only Saxon who could liberally reward his supporters; and the only one who could hope to maintain himself on the throne, if raised to it; every province of the kingdom being already under his government, or that of his dependants.

He, therefore, took possession of the throne, without any opposition at home; Edgar Atheling accepting from him the earldom of Oxford. That there might be no time for any hostile interference from abroad, he had Edward buried the very day after his death; and was himself solemnly crowned by Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, the same evening.

And now Godwin's schemes, for the aggrandizement of his family, seemed to have succeeded far beyond what his most ambitious hopes could have tempted him to anticipate, when he quitted his herd to be Ulfr's guide. His son was King of England. But the word of God has pronounced, that *the triumphing of the wicked shall be short. Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever. They who have seen him shall say, Where is he? That which he laboured for shall he restore; and shall not swallow it down. The increase of his house shall depart.* And though the punishment of the wicked be, sometimes, reserved to the great day of destruction, yet at others the Lord chooses to show his power in the sight of men, by *bringing upon them their own iniquity, and cutting them off through their own wickedness.* And so it was in this case. The unprincipled ambition of which Godwin had

set his family the example, was made to work the sudden and signal destruction of that family.

William immediately began to make the most prudent preparations for getting possession of a kingdom, which he asserted Edward had bequeathed to him. He besought the Pope to bless his cause, and received from him a consecrated banner. He persuaded the sovereigns, his neighbours, to promise that no attempt should be made on Normandy, in his absence; and, by holding out the hopes of sharing a kingdom, he seduced the bravest of their nobles to accompany him with followers armed at their own expence. By the end of August he had collected 1000 ships, and found himself at the head of 60,000 men. But the winds were contrary; and his army was detained for several weeks, on the other side of the channel, much against his will and their own. Harold, too, made considerable preparations to oppose him; and a well-manned Saxon fleet cruised between Dover and the Isle of Wight.

At this time mere worldly policy should have suggested to every member of the Godwin family the necessity of relinquishing their private disputes, and of uniting with one heart to repel a formidable intruder who, if successful, would certainly crush the power of their house, and strip them of all they were contending for. But, instead of this union, Tostig, impelled by ambition and hatred of his brother Harold, had been urging Hardrada, King of Norway, to come forward as the representative of Canute's claims, and seize on England as a Danish conquest. Whilst Harold was anxiously watching the motions of his more feared rival, William, he was surprised by intelligence that Tostig and Hardrada had entered the Humber with 500 sail; and news quickly came, that they had landed their forces; had defeated the Northumbrians; and were gone to besiege York, in which Earl Morcar and his brother had shut themselves

up. The necessity of stopping the farther progress of these invaders was so urgent, that Harold was obliged to march northward immediately. Before coming to an engagement, however, Harold attempted to buy off his brother's opposition; being aware that he could not well afford to lose either time or men, and therefore desirous to have to combat the King of Norway alone.

His offers to Tostig comprehended his restoration to the earldom of Northumberland, with increased honour. "And if I accept these terms," answered his brother, "what will you give to the king, my ally?" "Seven feet of ground; or, as he is a tall man, perhaps a little more," was Harold's insolent reply. It was as though he had said, power and wealth are what you came to fight for. Those you shall have; but I cannot believe you care for your friend. Tostig, however, would not desert Hardrada for Harold, whom he hated, and could not trust. They fought. Hardrada soon fell; and Tostig assumed the command. Harold, still uncertain of the result, renewed his offers; but the battle continued, and brother fought brother with desperate ferocity, till Tostig and most of the Norwegian nobility were slain. Harold's army must also have suffered considerable loss; and it was soon farther weakened by desertion. For the King was so excessively elated by his victory, that he seems to have persuaded himself William would now be afraid of coming, and that, consequently, the attachment of his own troops was of little importance. Hence he ventured to irritate his soldiers, by covetously seizing for himself all the spoils of the Norwegian army, instead of sharing it with them. But whilst he was fighting in the north, his fleet had been obliged to come into harbour, to revictual; and at the same time the wind became favourable for William's crossing the channel.

The battle with Hardrada was fought on the

25th of September, and on the 28th William landed; unopposed, near Hastings. As he jumped from his boat to the shore, he fell; and filled his hands with mud. In those superstitious days his fall was enough to have broken the courage of the bravest men in his army; by leading them to think that it was a certain sign of a far heavier fall to come, in the day of battle. They who know not God are often *in great fear, where no fear is*. A judicious bystander, however, exclaimed, 'Fortunate general, you have taken England. See, its earth is in your hands.' At hearing these words faces, which had turned pale, brightened afresh.

Harold was at dinner, in York, when the account of William's landing reached him. He instantly hastened to London, and from thence into Sussex, without taking time to recruit his army. And, as if certain of victory, he sent his fleet to sea again, to prevent the escape of the Normans. But they had no intention to quit the country. When Gurth, a brother of the king, saw the arrangement of their camp, the sight of danger made him reflect that the guilt of a commander might bring down the wrath of heaven on his army; wherefore he said to Harold, 'I never called God and the saints to witness, as you did, that I would support duke William in claiming the English crown. Let me lead our army into battle to-morrow.' But Harold had more confidence in his own valour and military skill, than fear of the interference of God, whom he saw not; and therefore refused to resign the command.

The night, we are told, was passed by the Saxons in feasting, and drinking; by the Normans in devotion. But we cannot suppose that the prayers of chiefs who begged to be successful in robbing a people who had done them no wrong, and to be enabled to slay such as should dare to defend their property and country, could be acceptable in His ears, *whose soul hateth him that loveth violence*. A

decree had gone forth that the wicked house of Godwin should perish. Harold came to the contest with hands fresh reeking from a brother's blood ; but it was not for any righteousness in the Normans that they were made the executioners of divine justice.

The following day the two armies met, on the spot where an abbey was afterwards built, and a town sprung up, thence named Battle. William hung round his neck the relics on which Harold had sworn to befriend his cause, as though he would thus appeal to some dead saint to revenge the perjury ; and he bade his troops think of the treacherous murder of his kinsman Alfred. Both nations fought bravely ; and many, who would have lived as peaceful yeomen, perished victims to the ambition of their lords. Harold had drawn up his men with skill on a rising ground, where they stood the onset of their foes so firmly that the Normans, dismayed by their losses in attacking this compact body, were beginning to retreat. But William rallied them to another attack ; and, when this too proved unavailing, he caused a body of a thousand horse to charge the English, and then turn their backs and flee, as if in terror. He was well obeyed ; and the Saxons, quitting their lines to pursue the supposed fugitives, broke the order of their own army. A chosen band of William's best soldiers rushed in, where the pursuers had quitted their post. Harold was struck in the eye by an unaimed arrow, and thus slain. His brothers, Gurth and Leofwin, likewise fell ; and, though the sun was setting before the Normans had gained a decisive advantage, the victory was complete.

The difficulty with which the day was won marks most decidedly the hand of God, employed to arrange and bring about those various events, quite out of the reach of human contrivance, all tending

to weaken Harold's army, and to preserve William's in its strength up to the hour of the battle.

Who but He made the winds detain the Norman invaders, till Harold had been called away to a distance; and then sent them a gale favourable to their crossing the sea, just as his fleet was compelled by want of provisions to quit its station; thus giving William the means of effecting his landing without a previous naval battle; by which, even if victorious, his army must have been somewhat weakened? Who but the same ruler of hearts, even of those which mock his declared will, suffered the pride of Harold, the foolish ambition of Hardrada, and the obstinacy of Tostig, to excite each to contend so fiercely in that fight near York, in which Harold lost many a brave soldier, and his bold and restless brother was cut off; whereas had he come later to England, he might have rallied the Saxons after Harold's death? And though this victory was dearly bought, the loss of men might have been compensated, by its giving the English troops an useful confidence in their leader's skill; and by its enabling him to bring every Saxon, capable of bearing arms, into the field against William; as there was no longer another enemy to be feared. But at this critical moment Harold's vices were permitted to overrule what common prudence must have dictated to him. His greediness after wealth making him disgust, and thus lose the services of the most spirited of his followers; and his pride tempting him not only to rush on to a decisive contest without giving himself time for the collection of a larger force, but also to diminish still farther the numbers of his army, by sending men on board the fleet so uselessly sent out again. Lastly, who but the Sovereign Disposer of all events made an arrow, shot at a venture, to pierce Harold's eye; whilst William equally ex-

posed remained unhurt? And who but He devised that the king's brothers, Gurth and Leofwin, being slain in the promiscuous crowd of combatants, the Saxons should thus be left without a successor for Harold to take the command of the defeated army, and keep it together till reinforcements could recruit its loss; so that the whole nation submitted, almost without further struggle, to a foreign invader who had but won a single battle, and that without having penetrated ten miles from the coast?

But whilst it becomes impossible not to acknowledge the disposing hand of Providence in the events which gave success to the Norman invasion, we must not imagine that this interference was exerted merely to bring about the merited punishment of Godwin's wicked family.

The same events are frequently intended, and made, to contribute to present and distant objects, to particular and very extensive results, to the ends of vengeance and mercy, by Him whose wisdom surveys and determines all the consequences of every action.

By placing England under the dominion of a sovereign, who had large possessions in France, the English were led to maintain a constant intercourse with their fellow-subjects across the channel. In the first place, this encouraged commerce, and formed a race of able seamen. Other still more important consequences followed from the same connection. For the arts and learning began to revive in the southern parts of Europe; and but for the intercourse with the continent now forced upon the English, they would have been much later in sharing the benefits of that revival. And in its train came the restoration of the knowledge of the Scriptures; from whence burst forth that blessed light which produced the Reformation. But where despotism was able to quench that light, it broke out in vain. And had the voice of the people possessed

no more influence in England than it did in France or Spain, when the priests called out to the kings to exterminate heresy, as they chose to name reformed religion, popery might have kept down the truth in England by fire and the sword as firmly as it did in those less favoured countries. It became, therefore, the wisdom of the Almighty to provide for the preservation of so much freedom, in this land, as should prevent the spirit of reformation from being strangled in its birth; and might, as it increased, promote his merciful purpose of making the knowledge of Himself to spread and take deep root here.

Now William's conquest, and even Harold's short reign, were both important steps towards the formation of English liberty; and thus paved the way for a blessing whose benefits, it is to be hoped, each reader will so make his own, that when this loved island and the world that bears it, are passed away, he may still be rejoicing in them.

A very few words, on what has passed in the rest of Europe, will suffice to shew, how remarkably the contest between Harold and William contributed to form that free and wise system of government under which we live. The boasted freedom of Englishmen has, indeed, long been a favourite subject with politicians; but the most profitable view of it is that which calls forth our gratitude to God, by displaying His goodness as, long ago, providing for its establishment.

We have seen that England had latterly become divided into four or five extensive provinces, governed by so many Saxon earls, possessing such influence and wealth that each of them was nearly a match for his sovereign. In the other kingdoms of Europe a very similar division of power was prevalent at this time. The supreme authority was as limited in those countries as in England; and continued to be so, for some centuries. But the kings gradually got the mastery of one of these great nobles

after another, till the whole power of the state finally fell into the sovereign's hands; and he became an absolute monarch. Had the Saxon government been suffered to run its course, or even if William had been peaceably invited to take possession of the throne, as the acknowledged and unresisted heir of Edward the Confessor, there is no reasonable ground for supposing that the English people would have continued longer, or more free, than the French or Spaniards. But the seizure of the crown by Harold, and the resistance William had to overcome, obliged the latter to procure the support of a great number of the nobles of the continent; and, by the grants required from him, for their remuneration, the landed property of England became divided amongst several hundred gentlemen who had fought in his service, instead of seven or eight great chieftains. And when William's successors, like the other European kings, sought to extend their authority at the expence of any noble, whom they particularly wished to humble, no individual found himself strong enough to contend alone against his sovereign. Hence the English nobility being, separately, very much less powerful than the peers of France, felt it necessary to make common cause in defence of their order, and its rights, against the attempts of their monarch; and then he was naturally led to seek the support of the humbler classes of freemen by protecting them, on various occasions, from the violence of his haughty barons; whilst those barons would frequently bid against him, as it were, for the same assistance; by giving, or procuring for the lower ranks of their fellow-subjects, some of those privileges which elsewhere custom confined to the nobility alone. And thus the liberties of the great body of the people grew up, in consequence of the formation of such a nobility as could not resist the king without seeking their help; whereby the good-will

of the commons came to be sought both by nobles and king. But had not William's conquest broken up the great power of the Saxon earls, or had not Harold's opposition brought upon William the necessity of repaying such a numerous body of claimants, such a nobility and gentry would not have been created. So that by suffering the ambition of Harold to raise him to the throne, and then giving William the victory, the best provision was made, and such as human prudence could never have devised, for establishing in England that free government which has been so long our peculiar blessing.

In these remarks we have anticipated the effects which it was the Almighty's merciful purpose to employ the Norman Conquest in producing gradually, as ages should pass on. As to its immediate effects, the punishment of the wicked reigning family has already been noticed; but it may well be supposed that the Lord would have *pulled down the mighty from their seat*, and brought them to destruction, without giving up the people to be subdued by their enemies, had not their conduct likewise called down his just wrath upon them.

The Saxons assert, that it was their intercourse with the Danes which first made them a drunken people. And, if it was particularly the habit of the latter, it is no wonder that the union of the two races made that degrading vice, still more, a national offence. But if the English sinned against the personal duty of temperance, they were equally addicted to violating their duty towards their neighbours. God hath said, *avenge not yourselves. Vengeance is mine; I will repay.* But, when they were offended, they chose neither to wait till He should pronounce His sentence against the guilty; nor for the shorter delay, requisite to bring upon offenders the punishments prescribed by human laws. Every one rushed to revenge his own wrong with his own sword; according to the measure

which his own passions took of the offence. And this had become so much a national habit, that, instead of attempting to prevent such violence, the Saxon lawgivers had latterly ventured to do no more than limit the period during which an injured person, or his family, might endeavour to revenge themselves on the injurer and his relations. Thus was violence multiplied, till none held it in abhorrence, save those who were suffering under it. How corrupt the national feeling had become in this respect may be guessed from the popularity which the Godwin family acquired by their pomp and generosity to their dependants, though men believed, of them, that if they beheld a house, to covet it, they would direct their followers to go, by night, and murder the proprietor and his whole family; and then would procure a grant of the property, as without an heir.

And, whilst they who were powerful dared to offend thus, the weaker sinner would steal his neighbour's child, to sell him to foreigners as a slave.

In the city of Bristol young men and women might be seen tied together by ropes, and daily exposed for sale; being collected from all parts of England for exportation. And though it is recorded that, at least, one bishop, Wulstan of Worcester, was found to raise his voice against this most wicked commerce; and that his preaching brought the people of Bristol to repent and resign this lucrative trade, yet the sentence of the LORD, that *the stealer of his brethren*, to sell them, *should die**, was slighted; and *the evil* was not *put away from among the people*. How justly were they given up to a severe bondage under the Normans, who were accustomed to give up their own flesh and blood for money, to pine away in slavery in some foreign land!

* Deut. xxiv. 7.

Drunkenness the Saxon lawgivers endeavoured, in vain, to check. Revenge, they connived at. The law of Alfred, which would soon have put an end to slavery, was neglected by common consent. Another grievous sin was made most deplorably prevalent, by the abuse of that law which established juries. For whereas a certain number of persons were required by it to swear, that they believed any accused party to be guilty, or innocent; and the duty of carefully searching into the facts of the case was thus imposed upon them; men began to neglect this duty, and to perjure themselves to gain an end. Till, at length, it became a general custom for each party to bring as large a number of friends, frequently of dependants, as he could; and these heedlessly swore to the innocence of the person who brought them into court; merely because they had private reasons for wishing to serve him. Thus God was mocked by false swearing; and the rights of the poor and friendless were trampled upon, by men who could bring fifty, or a hundred, wicked companions to pledge their false oaths to any thing. The oaths too of the rich were regularly counted as worth those of several poor men; and the event of the trial was decided by numbers.

The injustice which resulted from such a system, so wickedly carried on, gave popularity to another evil practice of a very singular kind. For innocent persons, falsely charged with any offence, perceiving themselves very liable to be out-sworn, got into a way of appealing to the direct interference of heaven. They were willing to expose themselves to danger from fire or water, and trust that God would make their innocence manifest, by protecting them from harm. Such a trial was called an *ordeal*. The one by fire was of two kinds. In the first, a ball of iron was prepared of one, two, or three pounds weight, according to the nature of the offence charged. This was heated

red-hot in the fire; and then the accused had it put in his hand, and was required to run, and deliver it on a spot nine feet distant. After this his hand was sealed up in a bag, before witnesses, by the priest; to be untied and examined at the end of three days. If the skin was then found to be sound he was declared innocent; if not, guilty. In the other ordeal, by fire, nine red-hot plough shares were placed at equal distances, and the suspected offender, being blind-folded, was to step over them if he could, running barefoot.

In each case the arrangements were so contrived, as if purposely for enabling the priest, who officiated on such occasions, to employ fraud in behalf of the accused without detection; and his assistance was not unlikely to be purchased by a bribe. Every thing was done in the church; into which no one but the priest and the accused was permitted to enter, whilst the iron was heating. Then, indeed, twelve friends of each party were admitted. But they were ranged along the sides of the church, so as to be kept at some distance. Certain prayers were said by the priest, after taking the iron out of the fire; the accused drank a cup of holy water; and the priest sprinkled his hand with it. In this time, and with so many actions to be performed, any modern juggler would manage to change the red-hot ball for a painted one, unseen and undetected by the lookers on. In the other case the priest could, still more easily, so blind-fold the man as not to deprive him entirely of the means of distinguishing the burning plough-shares.

None of these ordeals, however, could have come into practice, but for the general neglect of the Scriptures. For, in every ordeal, the accused person was expected to expose himself to danger of hurt, in the trust that God would interfere miraculously to save him from bodily injury, in order to prevent his being unjustly condemned. Whereas the Scrip-

tures would have told them, that when Christ was asked by Satan to prove the protecting power of God, by casting himself down from a pinnacle, in trust that a miraculous interference would keep him from harm, he replied, *It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* Yet in His case there had been a special promise recorded, that such interference should be exerted in His favour if needful; it being prophetically written concerning Him, *He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep Thee in all Thy ways. They shall bear Thee up in their hands, lest thou dash Thy foot against a stone* *. Now Christ having thus taught that it is profane to put GOD, in this presumptuous manner, upon his trial; whether He will be as good as His word, in protecting the innocent, or not; it must have been either gross, and therefore sinful ignorance, or guile heedless of GOD's commands, which induced priests and lawgivers to encourage the people in thus tempting the LORD. We may be certain that He would not interpose to protect such as thus slighted His word, from any evil consequences of their forbidden rashness. When the appeal was made to the second ordeal by fire, the calmness of conscious innocence might, perhaps, enable the accused to measure the interval between the plough-shares more accurately with his eyes, before the bandage was applied, and to step, though quickly, with more caution than a criminal who expected to be convicted. Yet calmness and agitation frequently depend more on the temperament than on any thing else. The bold wicked man may retain complete self-possession; whilst the very injustice of the charge may disturb and confuse the innocent.

As to the ordeal of the red-hot ball, it would, naturally, put the guilty and innocent quite on a level. The hand of the accused would, probably,

* Psalm xci. 11, 12.

be always found injured, and so occasion his condemnation ; unless the officiating priest was induced to befriend him and save him by some fraud ; either for reward, or from his own wish to screen a person whom he believed innocent.

These were the most important defects in the Saxon laws ; because they directly tended to set the conduct of the people at variance with the will of God. But there was another peculiarity, pervading the whole system of their laws, which it would have been a grievous thing to have had perpetuated among us, and which yet was so interwoven with all their habits and customs, that the Saxons seem never to have reflected on its injustice. The punishment of every offence, even to the taking of the life of man was fixed by law at a certain money fine. Half this fine was paid to the king, or to the lord in whose court the case was tried ; the other half to the injured person, or, in the event of his death, to his family, as compensation for the injury received. This was a considerable source of revenue to the king ; who had indeed scarcely any other, except the rents of his numerous landed estates in every county. And the division of the spoil made this system popular with the nation. Nor was it unwise, in the lawgivers of a fierce people, to abstain carefully from increasing their indifference to bloodshed, by the frequent sight of public executions of criminals. But the injustice of the system consisted in this, that the penalty varied with the place where, and the person on whom, the violence was committed, and that all these variations were in favour of the rich ; who had a less penalty to pay for injuring the poor, than for molesting persons powerful enough to have defended themselves from aggression.

It was certainly much less likely that a peasant should strike a thane, than that a thane should strike a peasant ; and therefore the strength of the law should have been directed to supplying the

weaker party with its protection. Now if the penalty had been fixed at the same sum for each, the punishment would evidently have fallen much harder on the peasant than on the thane; because the loss of the same sum is a heavier infliction on him who has little, than on him who has abundance. But not content with this inequality, the Saxon laws imposed a slight penalty on the thane who injured a peasant, and a very heavy one on the peasant who injured a thane, or even committed any violence within the precincts of a great man's residence. So that a noble might kill the cottager in his humble home, and could count out the sum he had thus forfeited without feeling its loss. Whilst the cottager might be obliged to sell his all, or even to part with a child into slavery, to pay the penalty demanded for striking, within the walls of his lord's castle, some insolent menial who might have scoffed at his poverty. How great was the goodness which, even *in wrath remembered mercy*; and, whilst punishing the nation's sins was, thereby, preparing the removal of laws which sanctioned such a system!

Nor was there less mercy shewn in what was preserved for improvement under the conquerors, than in what was made gradually to disappear. The most valuable feature of the Saxon government was the custom of having all great public measures submitted, for approval, to the consideration of the wite-na-gemot; and dependent, for their authority, on its sanction. The remembrance of this custom led the English to consider the Parliaments, after the conquest, as having the same right to make laws, and correct abuses. And the idea that they must have such a right was mainly instrumental in procuring the right for them. The Saxons were also accustomed to see their wite-na-gemot attended by persons of a rank inferior to the nobles. And the recollection of this was not lost, when the representatives of counties and boroughs were summoned to attend

Parliament with the barons. That the English Parliaments owed these two most important parts of their constitution to the traditions preserved in England, respecting the usages of the witena-gemot, will appear the more evident when it is considered, that, whereas the Normans brought the word Parliament from France, none but the peers and great officers of state sat in the French Parliaments; and they only tried causes, and registered laws made by other authorities; instead of enacting them by their own.

Inferior to the witena-gemot was the shire-gemot, or county court; composed of the thanes of a county, with a bishop and alderman, or sheriff, acting as their joint presidents. Here breaches of the peace were inquired into, criminals were tried, and claims were investigated. The maintenance of a spirit of liberty was much encouraged by the existence of these courts, in which every freeholder might make his voice heard. And these courts survived the conquest, though the bishops ceased to have a seat in them. To their preservation we owe our present courts of assize; in which the juries are still composed of the principal gentry and freeholders of the county, whilst the judges of the land attend as presidents; being persons whose experience and extensive knowledge of the law, make them much more fit to preside than the lord lieutenant, or sheriff, would be. At the assizes, as at the Saxon shire-gemot, most of the disputes of a district are settled near the spot, and the claimant has his case considered by his equals or neighbours; whilst their partialities are corrected by the judge, who is a stranger to the parties concerned.

Our English quarter-sessions have arisen, in much the same manner, out of the Saxon courts for each hundred. And, besides the advantages already mentioned, there is another, of incalculable importance, resulting from the imitation of the Saxon cus-

toms, in the composition of both the assize and session courts. For a numerous body of independant gentry and of freeholders being, in this way, called upon in their turn to administer the law, become sensible of its merits or defects. And, as they are not professionally interested in the honor of the law, the praise they bestow, upon the wisdom and justice of its decrees, is received by the people without suspicion; and attaches them to their country, and its constitution. Whilst, on the other hand, by speaking freely of such laws as appear in practice to be absurd or oppressive, they gradually induce Parliament to make such corrections and improvements as every system, devised by man, will stand in need of.

Amongst the Saxons these wise provisions for inquiring after, and correcting all injustice, were rendered nearly useless, as has been observed, by laws which the great made in their own favor; by customs at variance with the word of God; by the ungovernable violence of the powerful; and by indifference, in every class, to the guilt of perjury.

Where these offences could exist, in so mischievous a degree, it might be taken for granted that the national religion failed to impress upon the people a due sense of the necessity of holiness, and of God's wrath against sin. We have, accordingly, seen the Saxon church gradually wandering farther from the truth; teaching the alarmed conscience to seek refuge in human mediators, to the dishonour of CHRIST; and doing away with the necessity of holiness, by permitting men to believe that the help of these mediators might be purchased with money. Hence the wealth of the corrupt church grew, not from the piety, but from the vices of the rich. The reader may remember how Offa paid estates for crimes. The murder committed by a wealthy sinner led to the surrender of some property to a neighbouring monastery; and the titles by which the ecclesiastical corporations held their estates were, in

general, just so many testimonies to the wickedness of the great. At the death of Edward the Confessor, it is computed that more than a third of all the lands in England had got into the possession of the clergy.

As if, however, the declarations of God's wrath had not yet been sufficiently made of none effect by the traditions of false teachers, a still cheaper way was devised, by which those who could pay but little might yet sin without fear of punishment. Real, or supposed, saints had too long received such honor as should have been paid to God only; but it was now thought that nothing could be so acceptable to these saints as venerating whatever was left of them on earth. Hence if a monastery possessed a limb, or even a remnant of the clothing of some reputed saint, men went there to bow before it, or to kiss it; and leave thus to approach the relic, as it was called, was purchased by making a present to the monks. This abuse soon grew from bad to worse. Men, who, bearing the name of Christ, neglected His word, were justly given up to be seduced by Satan into a kind of idolatry more disgusting, to the eye at least, than that of the worshippers of Jupiter or Diana. For they indeed adored images, whose beauty might well excite admiration; but these people fell down and worshipped dead men's bones, or the corrupt carcases of they knew not whom.

Moreover, as the heathen have always placed great confidence in charms, so these deluded Christians trusted that a tooth or a finger, which they vainly imagined to have belonged to an apostle, would protect them from all harm, if duly honoured, by being kept in a decorated gold or silver case. Hence they who were at once superstitious and wealthy gave great sums for such relics; whilst the monks would bid still higher, in order to have in their monastery a possession which brought a greater income, from the accumulated contributions of all

classes of pilgrims, than the purchase-money could have procured if laid out in any other way. Thus Athelnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury in Canute's reign, purchased at Pavia, an arm of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo; giving for it, as is said 6000lbs. weight of silver, and 60lb. weight of gold. It is difficult not to believe that he or his attendants, much exaggerated the price, on their return to England. But had the Archbishop known the Scriptures, he would have read in them* that when Hezekiah observed the people of Israel paying much the same kind of honor to the brazen serpent, made by Moses at the command of God, as the English would pay to the supposed arm of Augustine, the good king had that remarkable relic broken in pieces.

Far from imitating Hezekiah the rulers of the church, at this time, were too frequently guilty of imposing on their misguided flocks in a manner which even their blind consciences must have felt to be highly criminal. They would dig up a corpse whose name was unknown, and wickedly pretend that a special revelation from heaven had informed them that it was the corpse of St. James, for instance, or of any other person, whose reputation they thought likely to bring many offerings to his shrine. And then they would publish accounts, which they knew to be false, of miracles; pretended to be wrought by the body after its removal from the grave to some church, or chapel, which was chosen to be, as it were, the temple of this false god.

To keep men from reflecting how absurd, or hideous, the object of their worship was, a great number of showy ceremonies were invented by the clergy, as accompaniments to the adoration of relics; and the prevalence of these naturally tended to destroy the simplicity of those few religious rites which

* 2 Kings xviii. 3.

our Saviour had enjoined his followers to observe. Besides this the belief that frequent miracles still repaid the peculiar marks of reverence offered to the least of his disciples, led to the expectation that yet greater miracles ought to show the superiority of their divine Master. It was not considered that when the Almighty gives, to those whom He sends with a new message to mankind, the power of disturbing the order of nature by miracles, He does it that mankind may thus be assured, that such messengers have been sent by the Lord and Governor of the world. But when the message has been heard, and recorded, the duty of attending to it may be made sufficiently clear to humble, and teachable minds by arguments built on common sense; and CHRIST wrought no miracles merely to be wondered at. Neither will He give a new sign to that generation which should seek one, tempting Him; He has already said, of such, *If they hear not the Scriptures, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

But, when men had made up their minds, that some great miracle ought to attend the rite, by which they commemorated the death of CHRIST, the exaggerating tone in which the priests habitually spoke of all ceremonies, and particularly of this, fell in with their prejudices; and it began to be thought that the words of our Saviour, *Take, eat, this is my body*, were to be understood to the letter; and not, merely in a spiritual sense. In vain had the Apostle preserved the warning language of our Lord. *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing* *. They chose to believe that, after the priest had blessed the bread and wine, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, their substance miraculously changed into real flesh and real blood. It would, have been just as sound reasoning to

* John vi. 63.

insist that the cup became the New Testament; because our Lord also said, on the same occasion, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood* *. The truth is that this manner of speaking was occasioned by a defect in the Hebrew language; a dialect of which our Saviour used. It has no word for *represent*. Hence our Lord explaining his parables to the disciples, said *the 'harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers, are the angels†*; and the angel said to the prophet Daniel ‡, *The rough goat is the king of Grecia*, instead of saying *represents the king*, &c. Notwithstanding, however, these obvious elucidations of our Saviour's meaning, the church of Rome adopted the belief that his very body came down from heaven; and that He was sacrificed anew, whilst the priests were performing a part of the service called the *mass*. Thus did they set themselves in direct opposition to St. Paul's reasoning with the Jews; in which he particularly dwells upon the superiority of the sacrifice of the body of CHRIST, in that being *once offered* it needed not to be repeated, like those offered by the Jewish priests §; and observes, that Christ ||, *after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God*.

The change, of the substance of the bread, was named transubstantiation. And, when this belief was established, the priests began to *magnify their office*, after a manner very different from that of the Apostles. Indeed their language became such as

* Luke xxii. 20.

† Matt. xiii. 39.

‡ Dan. viii. 21.

§ Heb. ix. and x.

|| Heb. x. 12. It is to be lamented that the English Bible has *this man*, and not rather *this person*. For the word *man* is not in the original; which like *person* is equally applicable to a divine or human being. The same remark applies to the expression *this man*, in Acts xiii. 38. Heb. iii. 3. vii. 24. and viii. 3. The Holy Spirit never names Christ, after his human nature, in so irreverent a manner as these texts seem to do, when thus translated.

conspired with other parts of his description to make many think, that the king, prophetically announced to Daniel, was a type of the church of Rome. Of him it was foretold *, *He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things, against the God of gods.* And they insulted the Almighty, by boasting openly as if their hand and word made the bread to become God. Nor did they confine their boasts to mere vain glory; but insisted as a consequence of this supernatural power bestowed, they said, at their ordination, that a variety of excessive privileges could not be refused to the priesthood without sin. Of these pretensions we shall find frequent occasion to speak, as they occasioned *wars and fightings* for ages to come.

But though the period in which transubstantiation began to be avowedly taught was a time of extreme ignorance, there were still some persons in the church who understood our Lord's meaning better; and who knew that the earlier divines, though they had often spoken in a very unguarded manner, held no such monstrous doctrine. These men, though few in number, boldly combated the growing error; and one of them, Alfric, archbishop of Canterbury in Ethelred's reign, was so much respected by the Saxon bishops, that his epistles were inserted into books of instruction, officially drawn up for the use of their clergy.

In a sermon of his, still preserved, Alfric observes, that "Paul the Apostle said of the Israelites, our forefathers *drank of that Rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ* †. Neither was that rock, from which the water then flowed, Christ in a bodily manner; but it betokened Christ, who called thus to all the faithful, *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst;*

* Dan. xi. 36. See also v. 37.

† 1 Cor. x. 4.

but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life *. This he said of the Holy Ghost, which they received, who believed on him." From hence Alfric goes on to remark, that Christ said, "*He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life* †. But he did not bid them to eat that body, which he was going about with; nor to drink that blood which He shed for us: but He meant by those words that blessed host, which spiritually is His body and His blood." In the same sermon he says, "The body, truly, in which Christ suffered, was born of the flesh of Mary, with blood and with bone, with skin and with sinew, with human limbs, and with a reasonable living soul. But his spiritual body, which we call *the host*, is collected from many grains, without blood or bone, without limbs or a soul; and therefore nothing is to be understood therein bodily, but all is to be taken spiritually."

But though Alfric had sense enough to revolt at the absurdity of a doctrine not yet thoroughly received, he was unable to keep clear of those errors, which preceding ages had sanctioned. In this very discourse he uses language quite at variance with the truth, as it is in Scripture; and far from consistent with what has been quoted from himself. Hence though his influence and arguments contributed to prevent the doctrine of transubstantiation from being so unequivocally adopted by the Saxon church as it was by the Norman, the practical difference, between the opinions held by the two bodies of clergy, had disappeared when the Conqueror brought over the latter to England. In the sermon above quoted, Alfric says, "His (Christ's) suffering is daily renewed by the mystery of this blessed host, at the holy mass. Therefore that

* John iv. 14.

† Ibid. vi. 54.

holy mass doth much for the living and the dead." By these words he plainly taught, that there was a sacrifice. The word *host*, as thus employed, means a victim. And he also taught, in direct opposition to the Apostle Paul, that the sacrifice of Christ's suffering was daily offered anew. When he farther said, that "the mass doth much for the dead," he, in fact, made the faith and the prayers of the receiver of no importance, towards the effect. For the dead can neither believe nor pray. The respect of the Saxons, therefore, for Alfric, did not preserve them from the very unhappy error of those, who thought, that the prayers of the priest brought about all the good to be expected from the celebration of mass. And thus was added to the sins of the Saxon nobility this most shocking indecency, that they had mass performed, by attendant priests, in their private apartments amidst *chambering and wantonness*; from whence they walked forth to *rioting and drunkenness, strifes and envyings*. If the priest was but well paid, he would, they thought, pray earnestly. And there was no wickedness so horrible that they feared to commit it, whilst prayers for their pardon might be bought; and whilst their Saviour himself, as they were thus miserably reduced to believe, might be sacrificed anew for their special benefit.

The Christian is struck with awe at such a picture of spiritual desolation; and is perhaps tempted for a moment to waver in his confidence in Him who said to the church, *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world**; and yet suffered His holy name, and His sacraments to be so abused, and the light of the Gospel to be so thickly obscured.

But when he reflects that the general ignorance of Gospel truths was brought on by the wilful neglect of God's blessed word, which as yet no man

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

forbade any to read, he acknowledges the justice of the Lord in giving up mankind to *walk after their own devices*; His mercy, in that He *cast them not away* for ever, *because they did not hearken unto Him**—and His most *tender mercy* to our land, *whereby the day-spring from on high again visited us*; whilst many other nations still *sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*, which then overspread them.

And when the humble inquirer searches the Scriptures, he perceives that, even during that unhappy time, all events were equally such as had been determined in the councils of the Lord. For he finds the Holy Spirit there declaring, beforehand, that the true church should be driven, as it were, into the wilderness, and its preachers cloathed in sack-cloth; and that a wicked power should prevail against it, whose throne should be in the city of Rome, and whose laws and customs should be those of the Romish priesthood†. Hereby he knows that all power was indeed given to Christ, even when Satan seemed to be again triumphant; and he farther learns, not to expect that the Lord should straightway interfere‡ to rescue the world from that *darkness which men loved rather than light, because their deeds were evil*. Yet he hopes, with St. Paul, that as GOD once answered the desponding prophet, *I have reserved myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal; even so, at this time also, there may have been a remnant according to the election of grace*§. And in this hope he will be confirmed, as he finds history detecting here and there one, in whose heart the knowledge of a most valuable portion of the truth was producing the fruits of righteousness.

* Hosea ix. 17.

† See Rev. xii. &c. xi. 3. xvii.

‡ 2 Thessa. ii. 3—12. 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. Dan. xi. 36, 37.

§ See Rev. xii. 6, 14. xi. 2.

§ Rom. xi. 4, 5.

And when he is farther told, that the church, to be *nourished in the wilderness** was even now secretly forming; and that a preacher of the truth sometimes came forth from thence, and scattered words of instruction for those who would receive it, he cheerfully acknowledges that, *faithful is He who promised*; and rejoicing in his heart, he says, with the Apostle, *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*†.

* Rev. xii. 14.

† Heb. x. 23.

BOOK III.

ENGLAND UNDER THE NORMAN KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

Reign of William the Conqueror.

WE left William victorious in the contest at Battle, to reflect a while on some of the probable causes of his being permitted to succeed.

On hearing of Harold's death, Archbishop Stigand, and a majority of the thanes collected in London, declared Edgar Atheling their king. But Edgar was known to be a man of too weak intellects to be capable of maintaining the national struggle against the invaders. The inhabitants of Kent repaired to William's camp with offers of faithful obedience, and obtained certain privileges by their early and opportune submission. As he advanced further Stigand himself came in, was kindly received, and took the oath of fidelity. Thus did all resistance soon dwindle away; and William, invited by a large body of the Saxon nobility, fixed Christmas-day for his coronation at Westminster, as king of England. He already styled himself *The Conqueror*; but he was too prudent a man to intend irritating the pride of the English by the assumption of this title. He by no means wished perpetually to remind them thereby that they were a vanquished people. *Conqueror* was, formerly, understood to

mean, a claimant to certain property, who founded his pretensions on his lawful rights. It was the success of such claimants, and the fact, that success was in these times of violence generally obtained by the sword, which gradually affixed to the word the meaning of *a victorious combatant*.

William was well aware, however, that it was fear, and not esteem, nor yet conviction of the justice of his claims which led the English now to offer him the crown. On the appointed day, therefore, he took the precaution of surrounding Westminster Abbey with numbers of trusty Norman soldiers. Within its walls were the assembled nobles of both nations; and the archbishop of York was instructed to address the English, and to ask, whether they consented to acknowledge William as their king. They answered with shouts of approbation, uttered the louder to conceal their real feelings; but this noise was unexpected and misunderstood by the foreign soldiers on the outside; who became ungovernable, in the belief, real or pretended, that the English were murdering William and their countrymen; and began immediately to plunder and set fire to the neighbouring houses. The noise of this tumult again terrified those within; the English imagined that they had been ensnared into the church to be massacred. The Conqueror sternly refused to suspend the ceremony, but soon found himself deserted by all except the officiating clergy; some getting away to save themselves, if possible, by concealment; some rushing out to share the plunder; a few, bent on restoring order. Those compelled to remain proceeded, pale and trembling, to put the crown on William's head; and received his solemn oath to protect the clergy, and to govern his people with justice.

Such a beginning gave the English but little hopes that their new king would prove a father to his people; and the reader, who has seen that their

sins might well call down the divine anger upon them, will not expect to find the LORD conferring so great a blessing upon them, as to make their subjugation a means of immediately improving either the condition or the character of the nation. The yoke of the Normans fell so heavily upon their new subjects, that the English looked back with deep regret, for some generations, to the Saxon laws, objectionable as they were in many respects, and to the ill-conducted government of Edward the Confessor. At first, indeed, William conferred some benefits on the Londoners; was kind to Edgar Atheling; and distributed to his own followers only the royal treasures, and the estates of the Godwins and of those who had fallen fighting against him. But, at the same time, he began to raise a fortress, where the Tower now stands, to intimidate the inhabitants of London, with whom he was conscious that he should soon become more unpopular.

At the end of three months he returned
A. D. to his continental dominions; leaving unpaid
1067.

Norman garrisons to harass the English by their exactions; and giving the command of the country to his half-brother Odo, bishop of Bayeux in France, and to Fitz-Osbern, a Norman made earl of Hereford. Both were men whom he knew to be likely to treat the English with severity.

The consequences were such as William was too wise, in the ways of this world, not to have foreseen; and therefore he justly lies under the suspicion of having intended that the English should be goaded into rebellion, whilst his absence would give them hopes of success. By this wicked device he would obtain a pretext for seizing more of their property. Into this snare the English fell; the violence of the Norman soldiery, and the oppression of the two governors driving the native nobility to arms in various parts of the country. But the different re-
ted without a leader, and without any re-

gular system of co-operation. Hence, when William chose to return, he found no difficulty in subduing any of the insurgents except Hereward; an active chieftain who fixed himself in the marshes of Ely, which were inaccessible to the Norman horse. But Hereward's bravery and skill could only add to the miseries of his country, by keeping up an internal war from which no result, useful to the nation, could be expected. Hopeless resistance is never kept up, at the expense of human life, but from folly, the obstinacy of pride, or the malignity of vindictive passions. Rational patriotism unites with religion in its condemnation.

The spoils of the forfeited estates of those who were convicted, or even accused of having taken a part in the late insurrections, were now seized upon to such an extent as enabled William to remunerate his followers amply; and thus, in reality, to transfer the property of all the wealthier natives, with few exceptions, into the hands of persons who could only hope to keep it by the maintenance of his authority.

The king himself retained possession of 1432 manors; a landed estate which should have been sufficient to supply all the wants of his government, without any farther demands upon his subjects; particularly as, by the system called *feudal*, which he introduced into England, the knights and barons, not excepting the prelates, were obliged to find soldiers for the army when required, and to maintain them on service, in the field, for forty days. Bishop Odo, made earl of Kent, received for his share nearly 500 manors; and another Norman bishop left 280 to his nephew Roger Mowbray, an ancestor of the present dukes of Norfolk; whilst Robert, count of Mortaigne, another of the Conqueror's half-brothers, was presented with 973 manors.

But the Norman nobles were as prodigal as they were rapacious. These gifts were insufficient to

enrich, or satisfy, men whose extravagance wasted in riot, what had been obtained as the wages of violence and sin. These unhappy men had perhaps never heard of those other wages of sin*, which they themselves must pay to the avenger of the oppressed. Fitz-Osborn, earl of Hereford, was always in want: Bishop Odo's insatiable desires led to his passing years in a prison. Others seized by violence the daily food for which they had not reserved enough of their ill-gotten wealth to pay. Hugh de Avranches, who had received the earldom of Chester, was surrounded by an army of knights, his retainers; who accompanied him wherever he went, pillaging the farms as they passed, and living at the expense of the people.

From such oppression some of the English fled to the extremities of Europe, and enlisting in the service of the Greek emperor, were allowed to form a part of his body guard; a company of which, for ages after, consisted of their descendants, and retained their native tongue. Edgar Atheling withdrew to Scotland; and his sister Margaret, marrying king Malcolm, the same who had recovered the crown from Macbeth, became the ancestress of both Scotch and English sovereigns. Through her the present reigning family trace their descent from Alfred.

The presence of Edgar in the north, and the hostility of Malcolm against the Normans, encouraged the people of Northumbria to make one more desperate effort, for getting rid of William's yoke; but he soon overpowered them, and took, as he in passion had sworn to do, a most desperate revenge. Having carried York by assault, he kept his Christmas festivities in that city. Of the spirit of that meek and merciful Saviour, whose appearance on earth he supposed himself to be duly cele-

* Rom. vi. 23.

brating, the king was, unhappily, most grossly ignorant. As if, therefore, he had been keeping a festival to Woden, rather than in honour of Him, who chose to be likened to a suffering lamb, he issued orders for spreading death and desolation around. To effect his ferocious object the more completely, William sent out his troops in small divisions, that they might disperse the wider; and bade them spare neither man nor beast, but destroy corn, houses, and even the implements of husbandry, with fire. The number of the peasantry who were slain by the sword, or died of cold as they fled, in the winter, from their homes, is said to have exceeded 100,000. How many perished by the subsequent famine, and the diseases which want of food and shelter would produce, could not be known. For nine years the land remained an uncultivated waste from York to Durham; and an eye-witness, at the distance of seventy years, speaks of the country as still strewed with ruins, which testified how the conqueror's orders had been obeyed.

Neither was the frightful passion of revenge the only thing which could drive William to make a desert of the country he had solemnly vowed to protect. That passion, when once roused, must be expected to rule irresistibly over a heart which has never sought for divine aid to subdue its natural corruption; but he did not hesitate to turn a fertile province into a wilderness for mere amusement. Thousands of humble freeholders and peaceable cottagers were robbed of their all, whilst he trampled on their few, and therefore dearly valued, rights, in the wanton insolence of despotic power; which will be gratified in its least desires, let others suffer for it as they may. Because the king loved field sports, every inhabitant of a district extending for thirty miles, in a rich part of Hampshire, was obliged to resign his property without compensation; to quit his home, and find another where he

could; and to leave the scenes of his infancy and the graves of his fathers, to be overgrown with thickets in which the deer might range. Even churches and convents were destroyed, that the hind might calve unmolested amidst their ruins. The name of New Forest still testifies that this vast chase had been a cultivated country before the conqueror chose to take it from men, and give it to beasts; and the higher value which game held in his estimation was farther proved by the infliction of severer punishments for destroying them than for slaying a man. The latter offence might then be pardoned for a pecuniary fine; but the killing of a stag or a boar was punished with the loss of eyes.

At this time the popes had assumed the character of redressers of national wrongs. They had brought the clergy, nearly throughout Europe, into such obedience to their authority, that if a pope issued what was termed an *interdict* against any country, no priest would venture to perform any of the offices of religion, except those of baptism and a superstitious anointing of dying persons, named *Extreme Unction*. The churches were closed; and no one could be either married or buried. To avoid the continuance of so inconvenient, and, in their eyes, so terrific a state of things, powerful nations were ready to submit to any alternative the pope might choose to require. The fear of incurring an interdict was frequently sufficient to make the whole body of the people as ready as the clergy to enforce any less severe sentence of the papal court, or any which affected individuals only; even if that individual was their sovereign. Hence when the pope excommunicated any one, and declared him an accursed person, the unfortunate man was avoided like one labouring under an infectious disorder. Even a king of France, when excommunicated by pope Gregory V., is said to have been deserted by his attendants; and they cast into the fire

the meat which came from his table, as if it had become loathsome by his partaking of it.

Yet, when the deformities which disgraced its practice were kept out of view, the system of the papal government was such, that if wise and good men had been employed to invent a scheme, they could not have devised one apparently better calculated for bringing the whole human race, without force of arms, monarchs as well as subjects, under one paternal government, whose sole objects should be the restraint of wickedness, and the promotion of religion. For when we look at the plan, and not at what was really done, we perceive that the pope was to be elected by a small chosen body of men, who were supposed to have relinquished all the pleasures of the world, even the most innocent ones, and all domestic cares, to attend to the service of God alone. Their choice was not limited to any one country. They might select the fittest person to be found in all the nations of Christendom. Neither humble birth, nor poverty, need hinder his being raised, even though he sought it not, from devising schemes for the happiness and improvement of mankind to the possession of power adequate, if any could be so, to effecting all the good his benevolence and experience had taught him to desire. For, on his elevation to the popedom, he would find himself provided with obedient ministers of his will, in the numerous clergy and members of the monastic orders dispersed over every Christian country. These were his peculiar subjects. They had neither wives nor children for whose safety to tremble, if he bade them act in a manner offensive to the sovereigns of their respective nations. They knew too, that few monarchs would dare to injure either their persons or property; and that, even if banished from their native country, the pope could amply repay their loss by promoting them to richer benefices and greater honours elsewhere. By them he

ruled the people; and through his command over the people he governed their kings. For the terror of his sentences tempted subjects to rebel against any monarch, who opposed the decrees of the pope; and he had the people taught that he could take away the guilt of rebellion, by releasing them from their oath of allegiance. Thus sovereigns, who feared no man's sword, might be restrained from excesses of cruelty or other wickedness, by the dread of hearing their just condemnation pronounced from the mouth of one who was acknowledged as the common father of all Christians, entitled to inquire into the sins or sufferings of all his children; and who could render the greatest monarch powerless by simply declaring him unfit to reign.

But plausible as this scheme appears, it was founded on falsehood; and therefore God blessed it not. Every part of the building raised on this corrupt foundation was cemented by wickedness; and a power which might have been most beneficial in the hands of good men, could they have held it and remained such, became the fertile source of every abomination in the hands of those whom the Scripture prophetically called by one name, *The man of sin* *.

It was founded on falsehood. For the popes' claim to supreme authority over all other churches rested upon two assumptions; of which the first was probably untrue; the second certainly so. The first was, that St. Peter founded the see of Rome, and was its earliest bishop. The second, that he left to the succeeding bishops of that city the same lordly rights over the successors of all the other apostles as, according to another false assertion, he had exercised over his brethren.

Falsehood necessarily required the support of

* 2 Thess. ii. 3.

fraud; and we have seen that in those ages too many had persuaded themselves that they might, without sin, deceive others, in order to effect what they thought a good end. The delusion was a most unhappy one; but it was suffered to seduce numbers, even of such as were sincerely zealous to serve God. These frauds, however, gradually brought the popes more and more, both of wealth and worldly honour. Hence wicked men became greedy for the *filthy lucre* attached to the office, and anxious to be *lords over God's heritage*; both of them motives solemnly forbidden by that very Peter *, whom they pretended particularly to follow as their guide and example. Unprincipled competitors of this description were so lavish of their bribes and threats that, whilst the Roman populace formed the bulk of the electors, a fair reputation had comparatively no influence in guiding their choice. Then frauds rapidly multiplied; and relic and image worship grew up; and the highest dignities of the church were given, or sold, to persons of the same stamp as the popes who promoted them; and the meek and humble were terrified by horrid imprecations, which the corrupt clergy pronounced aloud, against such as thought that the scriptures did not authorise what they saw and heard.

At length, under the reasonable pretence of purifying the elections, and preventing the bloodshed in which they frequently terminated, the profligate Roman people were deprived of their votes; and the emperor of his right to confirm their choice; the power of naming the pope being altogether usurped by the parochial clergy of Rome and the prelates of its immediate neighbourhood, who bore the title of *cardinals*. By this change persons of more decent exterior were, for a time, raised to the papal throne. But they were men not chosen for

* 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

their piety ; but for ability and boldness in carrying on those ambitious projects which were to elevate them above the kings of the earth ; and their electors, the cardinals, above its princes. The haughtiest and ablest of these popes was Hildebrand, who, on his promotion to the papacy, took the name of Gregory VII.

He, at once, summoned his own sovereign, the emperor Henry IV., to appear before him at Rome, and answer the charges made against his dissolute life. The emperor was a bad man, but it was most insolent in Gregory to assume that he possessed the right of sitting officially as his judge. Henry only replied by passing a decree, with the consent of a number of the prelates and nobles of the empire, by which it was declared that Gregory should no longer be regarded as lawful pope. But Henry neither deserved, nor possessed the esteem of his subjects. Hence when Gregory, in his turn, boldly forbade their any longer acknowledging him as their sovereign, his injunction was attended to by numbers who already only wanted a pretext for rebellion ; and it was not long before the emperor found himself reduced to such distress as drove him to wait on the pope, in the character of a humble suppliant, for pity and pardon. It was then that Gregory made so remarkable a display of unfeeling pride. The winter was one of unusual severity, when the fallen emperor arrived at the gates of Canossa, a fortress where the pope was residing with the countess Matilda. Henry was admitted into the outer courts of the castle, but unattended ; and for three successive days did he remain, from morning till evening, in a woollen shirt and with naked feet, as a penitent, requesting in vain to be allowed to come into the presence of the pope, his subject. On the 4th day he received absolution, but only conditionally ; being obliged to
at he would not resume the ensigns of

royalty, till Gregory should have finally decided whether he might be emperor or no.

This same Gregory, though not yet pope, dictated all the chief measures of his predecessor Alexander II., who encouraged William in the invasion of England. It was during Alexander's pontificate, as the reign of a pope was named, that a decree was issued by the papal court, intended to deprive all sovereigns of the right of putting bishops in possession of the estates attached to their sees. This was usually done by a ceremony called *investiture*; and a part of it consisted in the sovereign's receiving from the bishop an oath of fealty, as the liege lord was accustomed to do from the holder of any other barony. As long as this ceremony remained, the clergy had the appearance of being more dependent on the civil authorities than Gregory intended to let them continue. But though the general policy adopted by Alexander, at Gregory's suggestion, was directed to get all authority over the bishops transferred from kings to themselves, they were willing to employ it as William chose; provided they could thereby induce him to acknowledge that it was not he, but the pope, who had power to deprive such bishops as he suspected of disaffection to his interests.

Legates, therefore, as papal ambassadors were stiled, were sent into England, who served William's purpose by depriving Stigand, on frivolous pretexts, of the archbishopric of Canterbury, and several other prelates of their sees. And thus they proceeded till very few natives were left in any valuable or important situations in the English Church. The king filled their places from the clergy of his continental dominions. The archbishopric he gave to Lanfranc, an Italian monk, who, having quitted his own country, had established a school in Normandy, and gained for himself the reputation of being the most learned person of his age.

Worldly men are generally disposed to respect learning in the clergy, and to require that they should possess it; though they dislike that earnest piety which makes a minister of God anxious to convince them of their sins, and impels him to warn them of their danger. William's keen understanding, and his unceasing activity in the pursuits of ambition, would peculiarly dispose him to feel contempt for an ignorant and idle churchman. Hence, though he had made no scruple of conferring a bishopric on his unworthy brother, Odo, because he could thus convert the revenues of the church to the aggrandizement of his family, he gave a decided preference to men of learning in his distribution of the English preferments. The king even took pains to invite from the continent men of the most distinguished reputation for their knowledge of such things as were taught in that age.

Perhaps the manner in which Lanfranc seconded his political views, made him still more disposed thus to patronise learning: for the new archbishop despised the English, as an ignorant and degraded people; and therefore most readily joined in every measure intended to strengthen and secure the Norman government at their expense. Besides gratifying the king by depriving numbers of the Saxons of their benefices, he did what was equally pleasing to the pope, by taking farther steps to compel the still reluctant clergy to abstain from marriage. Lanfranc's partiality was also most insultingly shown in his requiring the poor natives, who had fought in defence of their country at Battle, and had either slain or wounded any of the Norman invaders, to perform penance for it. As the English archers could not tell what execution their arrows might have done, they were enjoined to keep fast for a triple Lent.

In consequence, however, the Conqueror received
* and just rebuke from a foreign monk,

named Guitmund, whom he had pressed to come over, and accept one of those ecclesiastical dignities from which some Englishman was to be thrust out. "I know not," was Guitmund's reply, "how I could preside over men whose foreign names and *barbarous* language are unintelligible to me; whose fathers, beloved relations, and friends, you have slain, or banished, and deprived of their inheritance. How can you give, without making me share your guilt, what you have ferociously seized, with much shedding of blood?"

Had the pope spoken thus, and insisted that the English should be less cruelly treated, it would have been a good use of the authority which he affected to possess over kings. But, when Gregory succeeded to the papacy, his message to William showed him earnestly bent on increasing by every means the papal power, but utterly indifferent to the distress of a people well known to be suffering under the selfish severity of the Conqueror. He thanked William for the measures taken to prevent the marriage of the clergy; and for his *piety*, shown in not selling vacant benefices; but he rebuked him for having failed to send to Rome the annual contribution called Peter's pence. He also ventured to claim homage from the king, on the plea, that the custom of sending a yearly tribute, such as the Peter's pence, proved that the kings of England considered themselves as subjects, *vassals*, of the pope. William told him, in reply, that the money should be paid, but that he would render him no homage. This answer Gregory took in good part; having enough of worldly wisdom to be fully aware, that a monarch of the Conqueror's character would prove much more difficult to subdue, or bend to his will, than he had found the emperor Henry. Haughty as Gregory was, he had the cunning to abstain from any expressions of anger, and, apparently, to overlook the king's conduct, when William chose to act

in a manner directly opposed to those principles of ecclesiastical government, which the supporters of papal power were labouring to establish.

The king, like Gregory, displayed his policy in the crafty choice of a convenient time for opposing a formidable power. It was when the emperor had set up a rival pope. Of that occasion William took advantage, to claim the right of deciding which pope his subjects should acknowledge as the earthly head of their Church. He also commanded, that if any of those papal orders called bulls were sent to England, they should be submitted to him for examination, and not published till he gave his consent. For this resistance to the usurpations of the popes, William has been praised by Protestant writers. But considering the opinions then held by all from whom the king received such information as he had, respecting religion, it is to be feared that he was acting against the suggestions of his own conscience. He, too probably, believed the pope to be properly supreme in all ecclesiastical affairs, but was determined not to yield any of his own authority, even though, by refusing so to do, he might be acting in direct opposition to the will of God.

The Conqueror's selection of learned clergymen for promotion, may, on the other hand, be fairly attributed to an honest desire of doing his duty towards the Church and his subjects; though he adhered to this system the more steadily, because he saw that it afforded him a decent excuse for removing the native Saxon clergy from situations which gave them an influence dangerous to his political views. It had a good effect. Prelates, and abbots, who were conscious that their promotion had been given them as a reward for their industry in acquiring knowledge, sought for advancement by learning more. They also exerted themselves to spread the benefits of instruction; knowing, that if they could teach the English youth to value their

learning, this would be a certain way of gaining respect; and that an evident desire on their part to communicate that knowledge which had raised them in the world, might reasonably be expected to win the affection of the natives. The learning they had to impart was, indeed, far from profound. But the desire of knowledge was thus revived; and its gradual growth was to prepare the way, though slowly, for the recovery of that knowledge of the will of God which is above all price.

It also pleased the Almighty disposer of hearts to incline the Norman clergy to join their influence with that of the best of the Saxon prelates, bishop Wulstan, for the purpose of diminishing the evils of slavery, and putting a stop to the infamous sale of children by their own parents. Perhaps the agreement of their wishes on this subject induced Lanfranc to save Wulstan, by putting a fraud on the king, from being deprived of his bishopric. For when the sentence of deprivation was about to pass, and Lanfranc, as archbishop, required Wulstan to give up his pastoral staff, the old man laid it on the tomb of Edward the Confessor, appealing to his former master against the iniquity of a sentence, by which he was to be degraded, for no other crime than that of being an Englishman, and ignorant of the Norman tongue. The monkish historians add, that a miracle was instantly wrought, no one being able to remove Wulstan's staff from the stone on which he had placed it. As the tomb was within the walls of Westminster abbey, where the bishops were sitting in council, and as Lanfranc was not a man to be easily imposed upon, he must have allowed his messenger to pretend that the staff stuck so to the marble that he could not lift it off. However contrived, the result was that Wulstan kept his bishopric; and the Conqueror was persuaded by Lanfranc to issue an order forbidding the carrying over of slaves to Ireland. The king also enacted,

that any native slave residing, unclaimed, for a year and a day, in any walled town or castle, should become free. And any master, taking his slave to the county-court, might make him a freeman, by putting a lance and a sword into his hands, in the presence of the sheriff.

Thus mercy provided for the relief of many, and for extending the sweet hope of freedom to still more, of a miserably oppressed class, who, having scarcely any will of their own, were not chargeable with the guilt of the national sins. On their masters William's tyranny pressed with ruinous severity; and the prelates, as well as their pope, were too much time-servers to remonstrate with him on matters in which his violent-temper would have made it dangerous to thwart him.

We have seen how the angry passions of the Conqueror drove him to lay waste the northern counties, whilst he desolated Hampshire in cold-blooded selfishness, careless what misery he occasioned to others, so that he might enjoy the pleasures of the chase. His love of power made him extend oppression still more widely, to raise money for paying the numerous foreign soldiers whom he continued to invite over. It is asserted, by a writer of that age, that the revenue which William drew from his subjects amounted to £1060 a day. This, in mere weight of silver, would be as much as £1,200,000 a year, in our present money; and a man then could not have earned, by ten days toil, more than a labourer now earns in one, so that this sum took from the people as much of their earnings as twelve millions of pounds sterling would do now, if levied on the same number of persons. But England is, at present, seven times as populous as it was then; which makes the revenue extorted by William from his unhappy subjects, equal to what a demand of eighty-four millions a year would be, if required from the present generation; whereas England, with Scot-

land and Ireland annexed to it, which were not included in William's dominions, was but required to pay seventy millions in the most expensive year of the late war. It must also be remembered, to the credit of the English gentlemen of our days, who determine in parliament on what the taxes shall be laid, that they make the heaviest duties fall on the rich and prosperous; on the wines, and other foreign luxuries, in which the wealthy indulge; on the keeping of servants, and horses, and carriages; and on the number of windows which ornament large houses. But the Norman kings took the whole rental of that by no means inconsiderable portion of the kingdom which they held in their own hands, as its proprietors; whereby the same districts which lost the advantage of having a resident gentry to buy their produce, and employ their poor, were compelled to send the largest sums to the royal treasury. And many of the other sources of the king's revenue, in those times, were still more objectionable; for the most profitable were those which were levied on the unfortunate and helpless. Thus, if any one was injured, and could hope for no redress but from his sovereign, he had to pay a fine for permission to have his cause tried in the king's courts of justice. And when any landed proprietor died, leaving his children under age, the king took possession of his estates, allowed the orphans no more, during their minority, than he thought fit, and sold the girls, almost like slaves, to the highest bidder who might wish to marry them.

The evils which William's oppressive rule produced, naturally went on increasing; for the more money he raised from his subjects, after having passed the bounds of a reasonable demand, the more his government was hated; and the more it became hated the more he thought himself obliged to bring in still greater numbers of foreign troops, to keep down the natives; and this again made it necessary

to extort from the English still larger sums, to maintain so expensive a force.

Things proceeding in this wretched way, from bad to worse, many Englishmen became so embittered against all foreigners, that if they met one alone they slew him; and then William, to protect the lives of his countrymen, was led to enact a most partial law, imposing a heavy penalty on the hundred in which any man was found murdered, unless it could be proved that he was an Englishman; for whose murder the penalty was not to be demanded. Many fled from such oppression into distant countries; and numerous families dwindled away from the united effects of want and despair.

The extent of the ruin produced by William's tyranny is indeed but too evident from an account of all the landed property in the kingdom, drawn up by his command for the purpose of making his tax-gatherers acquainted with the exact value of those estates which deaths and forfeitures would every now and then put the king in possession of at least for a time. According to this register, the number of inhabitants was already diminished, A. D. 1083. in the chief towns of England, to about half of what it had been in the preceding reign. Thus the number of inhabited houses in York was reduced from 1607 to 967; in Oxford, from 721 to 243; in Chester, from 487 to 282; in Derby, from 243 to 103; in Dorchester 100 houses out of 172 were deserted*. The celebrated re-

* In 1821, the number of occupied houses in these towns was as follows: York 3206; Oxford 2431; Chester 3861; Derby 3381; Dorchester 168. York being surrounded with walls, has had a greater check to its growth than other large towns; and Dorchester (Oxfordshire) has been changed from a city to a village, by the removal of its bishops to Lincoln; whilst Derby, on the other hand, has been accidentally increased by the establishment of manufactures. Balancing one thing with another, these towns may give a just notion of the comparative number of inhabited houses in the English towns, in the conqueror's

gister, from whence this account is taken, is called Doomsday Book; and the time allowed for its compilation, six years, proves William's anxiety to have it made accurate. Alas, unhappy man! how shall he escape from the undeniable testimony which this remarkably named book bears to his mis-rule, in that last Doomsday, when he must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of the important charge entrusted to his care, by Him who put the crown of England on his head?

The punishment of William's oppressive conduct began indeed, visibly, long before his death. They who set their own love on riches and worldly grandeur, might perhaps mistake his continued successes for proofs that he was happy and in favour with God. But the scripture tells us * that it is *to the sinner God giveth toil, to gather, and to heap up*. Of such toil William found no end. He had scarcely overcome the last resistance of the English, before his restless ambition made him think it necessary for his own security to destroy the power of the Scotch king. This he effected; conquering, in one campaign, all the valuable part of Scot-^{A.D. 1072.} land, and forcing Malcolm, its king, to acknowledge himself his vassal.

But when the conqueror had done this, he had again to fight with injured friends in England, and then he thought himself insecure till he had seized the treasures and arrested the person of his brother Odo. The king had made this warlike and turbulent brother a bishop, in sinful defiance, or almost equally sinful ignorance of the plain word of God,

time and the present. In his reign the number, in all these places taken together, was 1,667. In the late enumeration given above it is 13,047, or more than seven times as great. At present, however, the number of inhabitants in each house averages between 5 and 6. Men probably lived in a more crowded state at the conquest; if we allow between 6 and 7 to a house then, the population has increased sevenfold.

* Prov. ii. 26.

which says * *a bishop must be no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, not a brawler, not covetous.* Odo's character was notoriously stained with all these disgraceful marks. Yet when William arrested him, for the king's officers were too much afraid of the power assumed by the church to lay hands upon a bishop, Odo claimed that respect for the sanctity of his office which his own conduct had never shewn. But to his plea, that a bishop could neither be arrested nor punished without the pope's permission, William shrewdly replied, "I do not arrest you as a bishop, but as my own earl of Kent, whom of my own will I made governor of my kingdom, and from whom I require an account of his stewardship."

When once these domestic feuds had begun, they went on as if that just but dreadful decree, uttered by the mouth of Nathan †, had been pronounced against the king of England. *The sword shall never depart from thine house.* William, whose ambition had made so many childless, found that his own children lived but to embitter his remaining days.

He had promised to give up the duchy of Normandy, in his life time, to his eldest son Robert; and he afterwards withdrew this promise, and bestowed all his favors on his two younger sons William and Henry. Disappointed and maddened with jealousy, Robert drew his sword, on receiving a childish insult from his brothers, and would have slain them but for the king's timely arrival and interference. Robert had never seen his father govern his own passions; and he thought it was more mean-spirited than became the son of so brave a king to submit to any contradiction from any quarter, without endeavouring to take his revenge. Feelings like this are daily raised by unsubdued pride in the hearts of thousands, whose humble rank

* 1 Tim. iii.

† 2 Sam. xii. 10.

exposes them to much fewer temptations to arrogance than beset youthful princes. But the fear of man frequently prevents the inward wickedness from breaking out into open acts of violence. Robert knew no such fear; so his passions displayed themselves in their natural hideous colours. He withdrew from his father's presence, only to tempt his subjects into rebellion, and to head the rebels. In this disgusting war the father and son were once actually engaged in single combat. The son had the strength and the activity of youth; the father had a strong arm, but had grown unwieldy. William was soon wounded in the hand, and unhorsed by the blows of his son. It may be hoped that the armour worn about the head by the warriors of that age so concealed the king's face that Robert knew not against whom his arm was raised, till his father's voice discovered him as he fell. Then, at least the impetuous young man seems to have shuddered with horror at the thoughts of the dreadful crime which he had so nearly completed; for he instantly dismounted, assisted his father in rising, and then left the field. He had not the grace, having doubtless never sought it by prayer, to give up all his miserable angry feelings, and confess *father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Such a confession would have been intolerably humbling to his pride; but, if uttered from a penitent heart, it would have placed him, as well as his father, in a much happier state of mind than an offended God would permit either of these sinners to enjoy. Robert was, therefore, still left to follow his own devices. He continued in arms against his country and his parent, till his father's death.

That death came on amidst the most awful circumstances. The conqueror was at war with France, because its king had made a foolish jest upon his grossness of body. For the heart of William was

now so hardened, that an idle word could drive him to commit thousands of murders. The destruction of his fellow creatures, in a war undertaken on such light ground, deserves no milder name. He swore that a hundred thousand houses in France should burn; to do away an insult in which the inhabitants of those houses could not be charged with having any share; and in the execution of this wicked oath, he was encouraging his soldiers to fire the town of Mante, pushing his horse forward amidst the smoke and ruins, to bid them spread the flames wider, and, like an evil spirit, to triumph in the sight of misery.

In this most unhappy condition the hand of the Lord found him. His horse, treading on burning ashes, reared up; and William received a violent blow from the pommel of the saddle; an injury to which his corpulence particularly exposed him. His mind at the time was heated with passion, and his body by the surrounding fires; and he was carried off, in a high fever, to Rouen, the capital of Normandy. On hearing from his physicians, that there were no hopes of his recovery, "he filled the house with his cries," says an ancient historian, "because death had suddenly seized him, before he could effect that reformation of life which he had long since meditated." Arrive when it may, death always seizes those too soon, who, like Felix, though *trembling* at the thoughts of *judgment to come*, quench the suggestions of the Holy Spirit; saying within themselves, when He urges them to repentance, *Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee* *. Yet the conqueror found some false comfort in an expedient for which Felix would have been chidden by the apostle; though what Felix would probably have been told, William might certainly have known. For God had bestowed upon him a strong understanding; and had he read

* Acts xxiv. 25.

how Simon was rebuked for thinking *the gift of God might be purchased with money**, he could not but have perceived that it must be equally offensive to the Just One, to suppose that he would open the gates of heaven for money. But William had not employed his understanding to obtain the knowledge of the will of God, and he was now left to seek a vain refuge in his own devices; which consisted, first, in an attempt to make a bargain with the Most High, and to purchase forgiveness by ordering all the prisoners in his dominions to be set free, and by desiring that his treasures might be distributed among the clergy and the poor. In his order respecting the prisoners no distinction was made between persons unjustly confined and those whom it would be dangerous to let loose on society. As to his charity, it was altogether at the expense of his successor; for he himself could now spend no more. The next of his weak devices consisted in commending himself by prayer to the Virgin Mary, and supplicating for her mediation. Whereby he cast dishonour, both on the sufficiency and the mercy of the *one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*†, and on the Holy Spirit, who made these words to be written that all might believe and retain them in their hearts.

Thus was William a pitiable example of the truth of that Scripture which saith, that *the gospel is hid to them that are lost; whose minds the god of this world hath blinded*‡. Yet it might have been expected that he who cast aside the hopes of an eternal crown, *to spend and be spent* in winning worldly greatness, who had been severe and liberal, brave and expert, enterprising and successful, would have closed a triumphant reign of fifty-four years as duke of Normandy, and of twenty years as king of

* Acts viii. 20.

† 1 Tim. ii. 5.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

England, obeyed without dispute, and honoured with all that outward respect for which he had toiled, as his reward. But instead of this, he found himself constrained to yield to the wish of the Norman nobles, that Robert should succeed him in his dukedom. And though he named William Rufus as his successor on the throne of England, he could only give him letters to Lanfranc and other friends, expressing his hopes and wishes that this son might be crowned king. To his youngest son, Henry, he left but 5000*l.* in money ; encouraging him, however, it is said, with the hope that he would one day rise by the fall of his imprudent and wilful brothers.

Sept. 9,
1087. When the king had breathed his last, and it was to be seen whether gratitude or decency would continue, for a little while, that respect to his senseless corpse which the fear of his anger could no longer enforce, his sons and nobles quitted the house with unbecoming haste, to seize their inheritance, or secure their property. After they were gone, the meaner attendants seized his armour, his clothes, his bed ; and the dishonoured body was left naked on the floor. There it lay, till a knight, who had received less from his liberality than most of those who served in his court, undertook to bury his former master at his own expense, in a church the Conqueror had endowed at Caen. The funeral procession was joined, however, by the prelates and nobles around ; with prince Henry at their head ; but, as if to show how hollow was their respect for the late king, an alarm of fire, raised as they entered Caen, drew all away to look at, or extinguish, the flames ; and the corpse was again utterly deserted. Men who have lived like the beasts that perish, without any longing for spiritual blessings ; who have aimed no higher than to be thought more brave than the lion, or more cunning than the serpent, must be content to be valued after

their deaths according to the saying, that *a living dog is better than a dead lion**. When the body was at length brought into the church, the spot intended for its reception was claimed by an inhabitant of Caen, as his private property. An oration in honour of the dead was interrupted by this man, who called the late king a public robber, and refused to hold his peace till Henry gave him the price of the land. After this the service went on again; but the stone chest intended to contain the haughty Conqueror's remains was found to be too small; and instead of procuring another, that corpulent body, an insult on which was to have been so fiercely revenged, was roughly forced, in a disgusting manner, into its narrow bed.

CHAPTER II.

Reign of William II.

WILLIAM, surnamed, from his complexion, Rufus, or The Red, had hastened to England; and promising to be guided by Lanfranc's advice, he readily obtained the valuable support of that prelate. Yet some thought that the rights of Robert, as eldest son, could not justly be set aside; and such nobles as held property both in England and Normandy objected, that if the two countries were allotted to different sovereigns, they must soon lose their estates in one or the other; as they could not hope long to avoid offending both their masters, particularly if war should break out between them. This last objection, however, was not felt by the greater number.

* Eccles. ix. 4.

For having come with the Conqueror's army as adventurers, they possessed nothing beyond sea. As to the claims of Robert, the good could not esteem him; and the mercenary reflected, that William was on the spot, and had to distribute his late father's treasures. The united council of prelates and barons, therefore, soon declared their consent to acknowledge William as king.

For a while the new monarch made himself popular, by pledging himself to rule with justice, and to relieve the native English from several irksome restraints; and by giving away, or spending freely, the accumulated wealth which came into his possession.

But his temper was too violent to let him observe his promises. And when Lanfranc remonstrated with him, the king was not ashamed to reply in words which amounted to a confession, that he neither had kept, nor intended to keep them. "Who," said he, "can perform all he promises?"

Instead of removing restraints, he probably added to those imposed by his father, that severe one, by which all families were compelled to extinguish their lights and fires at the sound of the evening bell; which was thence called curfew, that is, cover-fire.

As to the liberality of Rufus, it was but the extravagance of a thoroughly selfish man. The money he wasted had cost him no labour, and he therefore chose to set no bounds to his profusion; caring nothing for the burdens which he thereby forced an unprincipled minister to impose upon his subjects. It is related of him, that his chamberlain having brought him a new pair of hose, William asked what they cost. "Three shillings," was the reply; and this was, at that time, the price of a quarter of wheat. "Away with them," said he; "a king should wear nothing so cheap. Bring me a pair ten times as dear." The shrewd attendant brought

him an inferior pair; but said he had with difficulty prevailed with the tradesman to part with them at the price named by the king. On which William replied, "You have now served me well: those I will have."

Such silly pride, and wilful prodigality, when extended to all the occasions of expense to which a sovereign is necessarily subject, must as certainly consume the revenues of a kingdom, as they would, on a smaller scale, destroy any private fortune. And a king, like any other spendthrift, will too surely be driven by his folly from pride to meanness. Though too haughty to wear clothes of ordinary goodness, William could lower himself to cheat a Jew. One of that unhappy race complained to him with tears, that his son had been converted; and besought the king to command the youth to deny CHRIST, and return to the faith of his fathers. William gave no answer, but at the same time shewed no horror at the request; so that the Jew was encouraged to offer his sovereign sixty marks*, as a bribe for compliance. On this he sent for the young man; told him what his father required; and bade him acknowledge himself a Jew again. The youth expressed his hope, that the king could not be in earnest. "Son of a dunghill," exclaimed William, "do you think I would joke with you? Obey me instantly, or, by the cross of Lucca, you shall lose your eyes." In this trial the youth was not forsaken by Him who warned the first converts from Judaism, that the obstinacy of that people would lead *the father to betray his son unto death*†; and that they should be *brought before kings and rulers for (his) name's sake*; but that he would give them *a mouth and wisdom*‡, wherewith to answer

* The mark contained as much silver as would now serve for coining fifty-seven shillings and sixpence.

† Mark xiii. 12.

‡ Luke xxi. 12. 15.

Though thus threatened by a tyrant, who was known to fear neither God nor man; and whose passionate tone and fierce look seemed to declare that his threats would be executed the next moment, the young man calmly replied, That he must suffer whatever the king should choose to inflict; but that he had hoped a Christian sovereign would have protected such as embraced the Christian faith. Finding him thus firm, William neither punished the convert, nor continued his threats; but, turning to the father, demanded the promised sum. The Jew objected, that his son was as much a Christian as ever. "I did what I could," said William; "and do you think I will work without my reward. As I have been unsuccessful, give me half." The Jew was obliged to comply; and the king took his thirty marks. The Lord hath said of him who should lay a stumbling-block in the way even of a child, tempting it to forsake its Saviour, that *it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea* *. When this is remembered, no one can wonder that William was given up to follow wickedness, to scoff at God and his Christ, and to work all uncleanness with greediness,

He could, now and then, exhibit some generosity to a bold enemy; because his pride perceived that such actions afford food for boasting, and his personal bravery made him indifferent to the fear of having to vanquish the same adversary a second time. Thus to a captive baron, who said, "You have got me by accident; if I were at large again, we should have a harder struggle." William, setting him instantly at liberty, said, "Go, and do thy worst." But when pride did not move Rufus to be generous, the natural affections had as little hold upon him as religion. Even his brother Robert,

* Matt. xviii. 6.

though he too was abandoned to many gross vices, and had been a rebellious son, could feel the love of kindred, when William made a mock of it as a weakness.

The king of England had obtained his crown at the expense of Robert's rights, as an elder brother; and he made no scruple of endeavouring, a few years after, to rob him of Normandy also. Being compelled, however, by those of his own followers who held lands under both, to desist from this iniquitous attempt, he made an agreement with Robert, that the survivor of they two should inherit the dominions of the other. When this was arranged, both united in entering on an equally unnatural war against their brother Henry. To get possession of his person, they laid siege to a fortress called Mount St. Michael, whither he had fled for refuge. It stands on a solitary rock, and the tide washes round it; so that the garrison were soon driven to distress for want of fresh water. Henry informed his brothers of the wretched state to which he was reduced; but seems to have had no hope of gaining relief from their affection; for he made his appeal to their honor only, as soldiers; who could but gain an inglorious conquest, he said, if instead of vanquishing him in the open field, they forced him to surrender, or perish, for want of water. Robert immediately permitted a supply of water to be carried into the fortress. At this William was enraged; and told the duke he was unfit to conduct a war. But Robert replied, "Should I have allowed our brother to die of thirst? If we had lost him, who could have given us another?"

The place at length surrendered; and Henry was allowed to depart unhurt, but stripped of his property. Soon after this Robert consented to mortgage the whole of Normandy, for three years, to his grasping brother William; on condition of receiving

10,000 marks ; a sum which he wanted, to equip himself for joining the crusaders.

As the great military expeditions named Crusades began, at this time, to have a considerable influence on the manners and fortunes of most European nations, it is proper to give a short account of their origin and object.

Within six hundred years from the appearance of our Saviour on earth, the neglect of the word of God had reduced the churches of Asia to a very lamentable state of ignorance, both as to the doctrines and the precepts of the Gospel. From this ignorance naturally proceeded grievous wickedness. The cry of this ascended into heaven ; and the Lord justly punished the sins of the Church by suffering an impostor, named Mahomet, to arise in A.D. 622. Arabia ; and to seduce many into the belief

that he was an apostle, sent by God to proclaim to mankind a new revelation of his will. This pretended revelation Mahomet got written into a book, called the Koran. It permitted men to indulge all the lusts of the flesh, except the desire of strong drink ; and it held out to their hopes a life of carnal enjoyment after death. Mahomet did not deny the authority of the Bible ; but he took care not to encourage its being read ; and he wickedly set the Koran far above it. At the same time he pretended to be very zealous for the honour of God, forbidding all image-worship ; but adding to that just prohibition, the assertion that God is dishonoured by speaking of Christ as any thing more than an excellent prophet.

To those who knew not the Scriptures it was pleasing to be told, that they might be zealous for the honor of God, and ensure such happiness as they most desired, without giving up *the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life* ;

with the exception of one sensual indulgence only, and that of a kind least coveted by the inhabitants of hot climates. But such as loved to read and meditate on the word of God, would know that He cannot be dishonored by glorifying his Son; for that word declares that when *the Son of man is glorified, God also is glorified in him**. They would also know, that the same word saith, *We are debtors; not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if any live after the flesh, they shall die*†. And also, that into heaven *there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination*‡. Thus, by the most just judgment of God, the temptation, held out by Mahomet, though strong enough to ensnare those who had neglected to seek the will of God in His holy Word, would have little effect on such as, in that *adulterous and sinful generation*, could still say with truth *Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors*§.

They whom the false prophet seduced to become his followers were named Saracens, or from him Mahometans; and their mistaken religion, Mahometanism. And, when he had gained over a sufficient number to form a strong band out of them, Mahomet farther taught them, that it was their duty to spread Mahometanism, not only by persuasion, but by force; slaying, or subduing, all who should refuse to believe his words. The people, thus summoned to make war on all around them, were the descendants of Ishmael; of whom an angel of the LORD had declared, *he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him*||. Such they were, and such they are still; for the word of God standeth sure. An invitation to go forth, and fill their hands with plunder was, therefore, a most welcome call. And

* John xiii. 31. † Rom. viii. 12, 13. ‡ Rev. xxi. 27.

§ Psalm cxix. 24.

|| Gen. xvi. 12.

when the successors of Mahomet led them beyond the bounds of their native country, they found the inhabitants of the neighbouring provinces, in Asia and Africa, to be a people whom dissolute habits had made indolent and cowardly. Out of these provinces the Saracens conquered Judea, and Syria, and Egypt, and the land of the Moors. They also subdued the ancient kingdom of Persia; took possession of Spain; and even entered France.

The vices which had made the people of these different countries an easy prey to their invaders, had also angered the Lord; and provoked him to employ the Saracens as his scourge. This dreadful visitation had been foretold, in the ninth chapter of the book of Revelations; and the Saracen armies are there described under the emblem of an immense flight of locusts, not springing up from the earth, but let loose, as it were, from hell*. And that the knowledge which the Holy Spirit possesses of all things that shall come to pass, might be the more plainly seen on the fulfilment of this prophecy, even the Saracen manner of fighting is there distinctly alluded to. For their force consisted in horsemen; and it was their custom, after galloping close up to the enemy, to wheel rapidly round, and then discharge a flight of arrows; so that they did most mischief after they had turned their backs, and seemed to be retiring. Wherefore the locusts, seen by John in the vision, were made to appear to him, as *like unto horsemen prepared for the battle*†; and as *having stings in their tails*‡. *Unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power*§, to give pain and to destroy. But though it might be thought that where they prevailed, the fiery trial of their persecutions would fall on all alike, we have the consolation of knowing for a

* Rev. ix. 2, 3.

† Ibid. ver. 10.

‡ Ibid. ver. 7.

§ Ibid. ver. 3.

certainly, that, even in that hour of distress, God forsook not those who put their trust in Him. For the same Scripture tells us, *It was commanded them, that they should hurt only those men which had not the seal of God in their foreheads* *. It was in their hearts to do evil to all who would not become Mahometans; but God could over-rule their hearts, and make them obey a command of which they knew nothing.

When their conquests ceased, *one woe was past* †. The countries they had subdued were, for the most part, governed prudently by the descendants of Mahomet, and of his generals; and their subjects again tasted of worldly prosperity. But it was shown to St. John that, after this, another plague should be let loose, also coming with a multitude of horsemen from the river Euphrates ‡; spreading slaughter and desolation; making war after the manner of the Saracens, and adding thereto other ways of destruction, by *fire, and smoke, and brimstone* §. Such were the Turks; who cross-
About
A.D. 1050.
ing the Euphrates with an impetuous and almost numberless body of cavalry, subdued first the Saracen power, and then the remains of the eastern empire. From the Greeks they learnt to prepare an inextinguishable liquid fire, which they cast upon their enemies; and, at a later period than that of which we are now speaking, they made use of the most tremendous artillery ever employed in war, whereby they gained possession of Constantinople, and completed their last conquests.

But the remarkable chapter which thus distinctly declared what judgments should befall the churches of Asia, spake also of those other nations who, professing to belong to the visible kingdom of Christ on

* Rev. ix. 4.

† Ibid. ver. 12.

‡ Ibid. ver. 14. 16.

§ Ibid. ver. 17, 18, 19.

earth, were not to be cut off from it by the Mahometan power; but would at this time be far gone in wickedness and idolatry. Of them it is said, *The rest of the men, which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship departed spirits *, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood, which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk; neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their thefts †.*

The affliction of their eastern brethren ought to have served as a warning to the Christians of the west, to take heed to their ways, and to search the word of God most carefully; lest they also should fall under the like condemnation. But, instead of this, the nations of Europe daily dishonored Christ their Saviour, more and more. They offered up prayers for help to his disciples, and other departed servants; as if they were more merciful than He who died for man. And they filled every church with images of Christ, and of real or supposed saints, at whose feet they bowed down and worshipped; heedless of the command, which forbade the making of *the likeness of any thing in heaven above, or in the earth beneath*, for any such purpose. They even seemed to search out ways of showing how lightly they held the teaching of our Lord. He had said, of Samaria and Jerusalem, *The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father ‡.* In direct opposition to this intimation, that God chose to be

* The word in the English Bible is *devils*; but the term employed by St. John signifies the spirits of departed men, whether good or bad. The spirits of men supposed to be peculiarly holy were worshipped, after their decease, by the ignorant Christians of those days; and are so still by the followers of the Romish Church.

† Rev. ix. 20, 21.

‡ John iv. 21.

considered no longer as listening to prayers offered in one place rather than in another, the people of Europe flocked to Palestine and Jerusalem, as if there only could they hope to be heard. Christ added, *The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit, and in truth—GOD is a spirit; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth* *. Now that a spirit is not confined to one spot, they might have known from the rapid way in which the thoughts of every man's own spirit travel far beyond the abode of the body, and the objects of sight. To go therefore on pilgrimages to Jerusalem after the declaration of our Lord, that it should not continue to be the peculiar seat of worship offered to his Father, was to insult the Almighty; as though He were not a spirit, but incapable, even though willing, of listening to prayers offered in distant countries. And what could be more opposite to spiritual worship than wandering in search of marks which the human body of Jesus might have left, to press with the soles of the feet the ground he had trod, instead of striving *so to walk even as He walked*, in righteousness and holiness, and love?

From all these errors the Christians of the western Church turned not; neither did their kings and their nobles cease from murders; nor their priests from deceiving the people, like sorcerers, with false miracles. And as to uncleanness and robbery, of these men made their boast; glorying in their shame.

After the Saracens had got possession of Jerusalem, such superstitious Christians as went there, in pilgrimage, were permitted to indulge their folly, on paying certain customs. But the vain opinion, that a sinner could himself atone for his transgressions, by performing a dangerous journey to Pales-

* John iv. 23, 24.

time, grew more universal as the Church became more ignorant and corrupt; and it was at its height when the ruder Turks became masters of *the* once *holy city*. These people had learned, even from Mahomet, to despise the worshippers of idols. And when they saw the crucifixes, and the images of saints adored by deluded Christians, they mocked them as idolaters, who refused to honour the one true God as a spirit; and they abhorred them, as at once disobedient to the law of Moses, of Christ, and of him whom they ignorantly named next.

The natural insolence of the Turks was thus made worse, by their contempt and abhorrence of the conduct of those Europeans who came among them; and it broke out in many outrages, and acts of cruelty, towards both the pilgrims and the native Christians of Judæa. The accounts of these things, which reached Europe, were aggravated by the relators, and filled the hearers with rage.

This general feeling of indignation, the idolatrous veneration for relics and tombs of martyrs, and the evident danger of permitting the Turks to push their conquests further, disposed all classes to listen to the harangues of a Frenchman, named Peter the Hermit, who at length took upon him to
A.D. 1094. summon the warlike nations of Europe to arms, for the rescue of Jerusalem. Peter had been

a soldier; he had travelled over Palestine as a pilgrim; he had borne the insults of the Turks; and he had seen and pitied the oppressed condition of the native Christians of the East. To them he had pledged himself, that neither fatigue nor danger should hinder him from taking every possible step to make their affliction known to their western brethren. For this purpose he travelled over the greater part of Christendom, soliciting its princes, and addressing the people in language well suited to excite their passions. He was of humble stature, --- his personal appearance was mean; but his

eyes sparkled when he spoke of Jerusalem ; and his natural eloquence went so far beyond what the beholders expected from him, that they thought he must surely be inspired. Hence he was attended from place to place by crowds whose veneration for him extended so far, that they even preserved the hairs which fell from his mule, as precious relics.

Urban, the reigning Pope, willingly seconded, with all his authority and influence, what Peter had thus begun. At his summons an immense number of nobles, priests, monks, and inferior laymen, met together in the city of Clermont in France.

As no building could contain them, the Pope ^{A.D. 1095.} delivered an animating address in the open air to the collected multitude. When he urged them to go and fight for the recovery of the holy land, and promised remission of all penances to every volunteer, an universal shout of approbation burst from the crowd. Of this enthusiasm Urban took advantage, desiring them to bind, that very day, upon their right shoulders the figure of a cross, made of any material at hand, as a pledge of their intention to serve in this war ; and he declared every person an outlaw, who, after putting on this cross, should fail to perform the promise signified thereby. The Pope, at the same time, pronounced a solemn curse against such as should, in any way, injure the persons, property, or families of those who should quit their homes to serve against the Turks. From the name of the cross, thus used, they who put it on were called *crusaders* ; and their expeditions against infidels, or supposed heretics, were styled either *holy wars* or *crusades*.

On their departure from the council of Clermont, the nobles and prelates were desired, by the pope, to use their best endeavours, each in his own country, to persuade their neighbours and tenants to join them in the intended war. The consequence was that such multitudes came forward as neither

the pope, nor the princes who thought of heading the crusade, knew how to dispose of, or govern. A bold adventurer, who went by the name of Walter the Pennyless, was accepted as their commander by the first body who quitted France to ^{March,} _{1096.} march in search of the Turks. They were a countless crowd; but not able to muster more than eight horsemen among them. Some however had oxen, employed in dragging carts which contained their wives and children; whom they took with them in utter ignorance of the difficulties and dangers to be encountered. Indeed so little did they know of the length of the way to be travelled, that when they came in sight of any large town, some would ask their guides, Is that Jerusalem? Walter must have been senseless, as well as Pennyless, if he imagined that the scanty provision, which a few had made for the journey, or the charity of the people through whose country they were to pass, could support his followers till they had attained the object of their expedition. And if he knew they could not be so maintained, he must have intended to provide for his own wants, and theirs, by extensive robberies.

Peter the Hermit followed him, soon after, at the head of 40,000 men, of a description but little superior. And he again was followed by a German preacher, named Gotteschalch, at the head of 15,000 of his countrymen.

All these armies miserably perished, without even coming in sight of Palestine. Walter and the Hermit, indeed, managed to conduct a considerable portion of their followers through Germany, Hungary, and Greece. In the latter country they were protected, and supplied with food, by the Greek emperor*. But they had previously suffered the loss of several thousand men, in disgraceful contests

* See p. 63.

with nations professedly Christian; whom they had robbed, or otherwise injured, by the way; and they had advanced but a short distance beyond Constantinople, before Walter was slain, Peter fled, and their unhappy comrades were all either slain, or carried into a wretched captivity: As to the mob led by Gotteschalch, the greater part of them gave themselves up to drunkenness; and so irritated the Hungarians, by their thefts and other atrocities, that the king and people of Hungary rose upon them, and, uniting treachery to cruelty, massacred the whole of them.

Another immense body of crusaders now moved forward; uninstructed by these awful marks of the wrath of God, against such as having vowed to devote themselves peculiarly to His service, bring His great and holy name into dishonour by their wickedness. This undisciplined army consisted of above 200,000 men. They met together on the banks of the river Rhine; and their vast camp was filled with harlots, and all indecent revelry. The nature of their zeal soon appeared; for the mercantile cities, on that river, containing numerous families of wealthy Jews, these crusaders professed to be unable to bear the sight of so many enemies of Christ; and therefore broke into the Jews' houses, murdering every inmate, and carrying off all their valuables. From the Rhine, reeking with the blood of women and children, they again moved on, preceded by a goat and a goose. That it might be clearly seen that Christ, whose cross they so unworthily bore, had given them up to the wickedness and folly of their own hearts, they were thus made to display their infatuation in the sight of all men; having actually chosen those silly animals as their leaders; halting when they stopped, and moving as they went on. In this way they reached the borders of Hungary, whose king refused to let them march through his territories. They were

however strong enough to force a passage against his will; and the king, finding resistance hopeless, was secretly providing for flight, when a strange terror came upon the crusaders, and they fled before the astonished Hungarians, who pursued them with great slaughter to the river Danube; which was almost choked up with their corpses. Thus was this vast army, also, utterly ruined and dispersed; in a manner which seemed, even to the observers of those days, to be the undoubted work of a just and offended God.

Had these unhappy wretches, or the greater part of them, embarked on their wild undertaking from a pious wish to serve the LORD with their lives, yet in a way not according to His will, the guilt of the mistake would justly have rested upon them; seeing that the Scriptures, which declare that will, were *written for our learning* *, and they had disobeyed Him in neglecting to *search the Scriptures* †. But though some having a *zeal, yet not according to knowledge*, might be ready and desirous, out of love to their Redeemer, to die, so they could but save even his supposed tomb from the insults of infidels, it is clear that but very few crusaders were of this favourable description. The poor ignorant clergy of that age, said that God, seeing the men of that generation could not be weaned from their covetousness and their cruelty, mercifully devised the crusades; as a way whereby men, accustomed to war, might obtain His favour, following the life of their own choice, without being compelled to bind down their conduct to strict rules. Thus did they speak of God, as though He were not still the same in whose word it is written, *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord* ‡. Now there are always great numbers, who, so far believe what is said of the Almighty, as to fear lest

* Rom. xv. 4.

† John v. 39.

‡ Heb. xii. 14.

His just anger should punish them for their sins. And if they could get rid of the terrors which spoil their enjoyment of the pleasures of sin, without having to give up those pleasures, they would gladly pay any price for such a deliverance. A wish of this kind has nothing in common with godliness. It is enmity to the law of God; and to Him, as the author of that law. Yet this was the hope held out to such as would join the crusades; and in this hope most of those went, whom the monkish writers speak of as taking up their cross at the call of religion. Of the greater part of the first crusaders, however, even those historians could perceive, that their acceptance of the general summons, to march to Palestine, proceeded solely from worldly motives.

The year of the first crusade was a year of famine; and crowds rushed forward merely to be led away to more abundant countries; where they might seize upon the bread they could not buy. Others went to escape the payment of their debts. Others again in the hope of winning estates, or perhaps even a kingdom, by their swords. Others to gratify their pride, by obtaining the testimony of men, that they were neither *meek*, nor *long-suffering*, nor *poor in spirit*. A few bold and aspiring men, like Walter the Pennyless, having no dependents to collect, and no funds to form, joined the undisciplined hordes who first marched off; at the head of which they expected that their rank, or military skill, would easily place them. But the ambitious, and the politic, naturally required more time to form their schemes, and to collect resources; and the proud wished for other beholders than those miserable mobs, of their state and bravery. The princes and great nobility therefore, with their armed subjects and vassals, moved later; carrying with them treasure sufficient to pay for all supplies wanted by the road. On the Turkish frontiers they mustered their united numbers, and found

them not less than 600,000 persons, of both sexes, on foot ; and 100,000 mailed horsemen. Amongst them was Robert, Duke of Normandy ; who had reached the coast of Asia by sea, from Italy, with a train of followers, Norman and English. Of this immense force, however, Godfrey, Duke of Boulogne, their chief, could only muster 40,000 three years after, when they were encamped June, 1099, about Jerusalem ; and, of those, but half were fit for action. The city, that ancient city, was taken by storm. And then it was seen that these brave and skilful warriors were as far from having the mastery over their own evil passions, as the wretched drunkards and robbers who had perished with Walter or Gotteschalch. It had been agreed amongst them, that each should possess in perpetuity whatever he took that day. As soon, therefore, as they had slain every inhabitant who resisted, in the streets of Jerusalem, each crusader fixed upon a house as his own ; and, forcing the door, murdered every inmate, the infirm, the women, and the children. And this massacre was perpetrated by men who bore on their shoulders the mark of the cross of Christ, of Him who, when but the ear of an enemy was smitten off by a zealous disciple, stretched forth His hand to heal it. Surely that evil spirit, who then *desired* in vain to have Peter surrendered to his will *, gloried at this time, in the mastery which sin had given him over so many, who called themselves members of Peter's flock ! It seems as if he sought to insult Christ his conqueror, by persuading thousands to fight that they might trample with armed feet on that very spot, where the LORD they professed to honour, had said, *They that take the sword, shall perish with the sword* †.

It is to be feared, that the same awful sentence

* Luke xxii. 31.

† Matt. xxvi. 52.

had gone forth against this generation, as was pronounced against that in which the same city saw Christ crucified. *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and be healed* *. For the crusaders washed off the outward stains of blood, with which they were covered from head to foot; and then they went in solemn procession, through the streets where twenty thousand victims of their barbarous warfare laid as yet unburied; and they wept for sins committed in Europe; and rejoiced in their later murders; and thought themselves the favourites of heaven. Nor was this wonderful delusion confined to the crusaders themselves. Such of them as returned to their native countries, they were but few, received the greatest applause for what they had done in Palestine; instead of being advised to repent of their wickedness, and pray God, *if perhaps* † their cruelty might be forgiven. The monuments of some of these crusaders are still to be seen in our churches. They may be distinguished by the figure of an armed knight, laid out upon the tomb in the posture of rest, with his legs crossed. By which it was intended to signify, that the person there buried, having worn the cross, was certainly receiving the reward of a blessed rest from all his labours. Thus they, who built these tombs, believed; not knowing, or not understanding the Scriptures, which teach that, to be counted as *the elect of God*, men should be seen to have *put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, and above all charity* ‡, or universal love.

But whilst all Christendom seemed thus unhappily given up to follow that perverted faith which

* Isa. vi. 10.

† Acts viii. 22.

‡ Col. iii. 12. 14.

had arisen from the neglect of the Scriptures, God was, at this very time, separating for himself a peculiar people in the heart of benighted Europe. It is true that *not many mighty, not many noble were called*; but some instructors were raised up, who proved, from the Bible, that the prevailing doctrines of the corrupt church of Rome contained much that was directly contrary to the word of God. And He opened the ears of a chosen few, men of humble and teachable minds, to receive this instruction into their hearts. This revival of the true light did not reach England till the middle of the next century; yet, amidst all the violence and wickedness of William Rufus' reign, the blessed effects of diligently searching the Scriptures were conspicuous in Archbishop Anselm; though he was not enabled to shake off all the prejudices in which he had been brought up, nor to escape entirely uninjured by his mistaken respect for the papal authority.

Anselm had been a pupil of Lanfranc, at his school in Normandy, but he might have thanked the LORD, in the words of the Psalmist, who says, *I have more understanding than my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditations* *. From them, he learnt, that *knowledge puffeth up* † unless the special grace of God prevent it. He was also led to reflect, that though a taste for the pleasures of learning may keep a man from some gross offences, and make him indifferent to pomp or riches; yet the contempt of what coarser minds desire is of little use, unless the love of God takes possession of the soul, and fixes its affections on things above. Anselm therefore determined to give himself up wholly to prayer, and the study of the word of God; and he was thereby led so to embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, as saved him from that worldly spirit,

* Psalm cxix. 99.

† 1 Cor. viii. 1.

which had too much influence with his master, Lanfranc. When Lanfranc died William A.D. 1089. Rufus proceeded as he was then in the habit of doing, with any vacant bishopric, or abbey. He seized upon all the estates belonging to the see, and refused to name a new archbishop. Thus the English Church was left, for four years, without a head. At the end of that time the king fell sick; and the fears of death and of judgment to come made him desirous to ease his conscience of some part of the load which oppressed it. He therefore desired, that Anselm, the abbot of Bec, might be brought into his chamber; and told him, the archbishopric of Canterbury should be his. But Anselm coveted neither the wealth, nor the honours attached to that high office; and he dreaded the disputes with his profane and passionate sovereign, in which a zealous discharge of his duty would unavoidably entangle him. He therefore refused to accept the offered promotion. His friends, however, observed that there was no hope of having that important situation properly filled, unless the king's nomination was accepted whilst he was in his present state of mind. They besought Anselm, therefore, to give up his own comfort for the public benefit. "Alas," said he, "if you will yoke me, an old and feeble sheep, with such a mad young bull as this king, the plough can never go straight. The poor sheep will be dragged along by its wild and fierce companion, through thorns and briars, till she has lost her wool, milk, and lamba, and is both wretched and useless." At length the archbishop's crozier was actually forced into the hands of Anselm, and he sighing accepted what many an ambitious man would have sold his soul to obtain.

Whilst the illness of the king lasted he spoke, and acted, like one who purposed to mend his evil ways. But they who intend to become good, reckoning upon their own power to reform themselves,

and seeking no help from above, can only be expected to end after the manner described by Him who knew the heart of man. One *unclean spirit* may have *gone out* for a while, but the Holy Spirit of God not having been besought to come and take his place, the former wicked inmate *returns to his old house, and findeth it empty*, and clear of every thing that might have kept him away; wherefore he *taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first* *. When William recovered he put off, for some time, the restoration of the lands of the archbishopric; and, at the same time he had the archbishop informed, that the king held a considerable gift to be his due, in return for the nomination. Anselm, with the help of his friends, raised 500*l.* for this purpose; but the king angrily refused it, as too little. "Do not spurn my offer," said Anselm. "It shall not be the last present from your archbishop. Use me like a free man and all I have is at your service; but if you treat me as a slave, you will neither have me nor mine." "Go!" replied the king in a rage. "I neither want thee nor thine." Anselm departed, and distributed the money amongst the poor. It was soon after hinted to him, that the king, on farther consideration, would be content to forgive him, and receive him again into favour, on his paying the sum he had offered. But Anselm replied, that the money was gone; and that his tenants could not be expected to raise such another sum; impoverished as they had been by the exactions of the king, whilst the estates were held by the crown. On hearing this answer, William exclaimed, "I hated him yesterday. I hate him still more to-day. Let him know, that the longer I live, the more bitterly I shall hate him."

* Matt. xii. 43, 45.

A request, which Anselm felt it his duty to make, was ill suited to heal this breach. He petitioned the king to name abbots in the place of such as were deceased, and of whose estates William had taken and kept possession. "What is this to you?" was William's reply. "Are not the abbies mine? Do as you please with your own farms. I shall do as I like with my abbies." The archbishop observed, that he ought to protect them, instead of seizing and plundering them. On this the king answered, "Your predecessor would never have dared to hold such language to my father." Rufus here spoke the truth; for Lanfranc *sought not the honor that cometh from God only* *. Anselm too would not have dared to speak thus to such a king, had he not feared God more than man.

It grieved the archbishop to the heart to find the king refusing to fill up vacant benefices, unless he could make a large profit by selling them to the highest bidder; who would generally be the very person most unfit to take upon him the duties of a holy calling. On the other hand, judging from himself, Anselm hoped that the heads of the church would sincerely wish to choose the most faithful shepherds; if they had the power of naming pastors for every flock. He was, therefore, readily disposed to believe, that civil governors ought not to be suffered to have any thing to do with the appointment to any spiritual charge. And as he thought it neither fit, nor lawful, to leave laymen to determine who should fill the lower offices in the church, he reasonably thought it still more improper, that an ignorant prince should take upon him to decide who was the proper representative of Christ on earth. For the archbishop, in his horror at the abuses proceeding from the interference of an irreligious king, was so desirous to believe the Lord

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knowledge Urban as pope; if he would degrade Anselm, and send an archbishop's pall to England; in readiness to be bestowed on any other person whom the king might choose. Urban was delighted with the prospect of gaining over so powerful a monarch to his party. He therefore made no apparent difficulty about the base ingratitude of consenting to punish Anselm for his fidelity to himself; but immediately sent over a legate* with the requested pall.

On the legate's arrival at the English court, it was known that he had passed through Canterbury without visiting the archbishop. The slight he had thus cast on so distinguished a person was taken as a sufficient proof that the legate had orders to attend to the wishes of the king; so William issued a proclamation, commanding all his subjects to acknowledge Urban as lawful pope; and having done this he desired the legate to put the pall into his hands, and take the necessary steps for removing Anselm. But the crafty messenger of the pope, having already gained from the king all his master wanted, declared that such a dutiful son of the Church as Anselm could not be disgraced; and that he must deliver the pall to him. He accordingly returned to Canterbury, and, with great ceremony, laid the pall on the archbishop's shoulders in the cathedral of that city.

Irritated as the king had been with the fair and open opposition he had met from Anselm, the cunning manner in which he now found himself overreached, could not but enrage him still more. After a short interval he brought another charge against the archbishop; on grounds with which he knew his nobles would not suffer the pope to meddle. He accused him of not providing fit or sufficient men, in proportion to the manors he held, for a war

* See p. 278..

against the Welsh. Anselm now plainly perceived that the king was determined on effecting his ruin; and he himself was equally bent on procuring the active interference of the pope, to check William's usurpations. Urban, satisfied with having procured an acknowledgment of the validity of his own election, and with having avoided the public disgrace of giving up Anselm, was content to wink at the king of England's gross abuse of the rights of patronage. But Anselm, like a man of simple integrity, was still convinced that, if he could but speak with the pope, all these evils would be corrected. He, therefore, again asked leave to repair to Rome; and when William threatened, that, if he did, all his estates and property should be seized, Anselm declared that he would rather travel on foot than be prevented from going.

Next to the fear of God, nothing makes a person so fearless of man's displeasure as indifference to pomp and luxury. The archbishop quitted his state at Canterbury with a pilgrim's staff, and a wallet on his back. And though the king had the meanness to order that he should be searched at Dover, his satchel was discovered to contain no more than the humblest pilgrim might carry. From thence Anselm passed into France and Italy; continuing abroad during the rest of William's reign; and receiving such excessive marks of respect, particularly at Rome, as were far more injurious to his soul's health, than the hatred of Rufus to his worldly prosperity.

It is to be feared that whilst the archbishop thought himself zealously pursuing the plain path of duty, in his disputes with the king of England, he was too often rather following the calls of pride. Some of the false doctrines then prevailing so exalted the priesthood, that it would seem to have been impossible for a churchman to escape the snares of pride. Yet if reason should justly say, *With men*

this is impossible; faith ought still to rest on the words which follow, *But with God all things are possible* *. And though the Lord chose not to work in Anselm so mightily as to subdue all things unto Himself, within that zealous servant's breast; till the last and great change should be made, whereby *our vile body is to be fashioned like unto His glorious body* †, free from sin and all infirmity; yet the divine blessing attended Anselm's pious studies; making him to dwell most earnestly on those vital truths still admitted by the Romish Church; and preserving him from the evil effects of those doctrines respecting departed saints and their intercession, which seduced such multitudes into a practical denial of the *one Mediator between God and men* ‡. It was peculiar mercy which led Anselm to say, notwithstanding all his prejudices in favor of the authority of those who taught a very opposite doctrine, "I know not to what other intercessor I could have recourse, but to Him who is the propitiation for our sins. That the only begotten Son should undertake to intercede for me with the Eternal Father, proves Him to be man; and that He should succeed in his intercession, shows that the human nature is taken into union with the Majesty of the Godhead." We cease, however, to wonder that Anselm was thus taught, when we remember the promises made to prayer, and read the words in which he poured out his heart for help from the only infallible teacher, the Holy Ghost.—"Thee, Holy Spirit I implore, if through my weakness, I have a very imperfect understanding of the truth of Thy majesty; and if through the concupiscence of sinful nature, I have neglected to obey the Lord's precepts when understood, do Thou condescend to enlighten me with Thy presence; that by Thy succour, on whom I thus call, I may

* Matt. xix. 26.

† Phil. iii. 21.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

pass through the dangerous ocean of life without shipwreck, and arrive at the shore of a blessed immortality."

That self-abasement before God, on which He vouchsafes to look with special favour, is remarkably exhibited in a short but striking passage from Anselm's published Meditations: "I have asked," says he, "many good things, O my Creator; though I have deserved many evils. Not only have I no claim on Thee for these good things, but I have merited exquisite punishments. But the case of publicans, harlots, and robbers, in a moment snatched from the jaws of the enemy, and received into the bosom of the Shepherd, encourages my soul with a cheerful hope." Such a deep view of his guilt in the sight of his just and holy Judge, naturally led to an earnest longing after admission into that heavenly abode, where *any thing that defileth shall in no wise enter**. This fervent desire he utters in words, which speak as if they came from his inmost soul, "Hasten the time, my Saviour and my God, when, what I now believe, I may see with eyes uncovered; what I now hope and reverence afar off, I may take hold of; what I now desire, according to the measure of my strength, I may affectionately embrace with the arms of my soul, and may be swallowed up in the depths of thy love."

How great is the descent, from sharing, as it were, these high communings with God, to turn to the consideration of so degraded a worldling as William Rufus. His reigning over England and Normandy, with neither enemy nor rival to fear; and his having no one left, who cared to admonish him with that freedom which Anselm had used, are plain marks that his offended Maker had given him up. He went on, therefore, daily adding to the number of his frightful sins, till their measure was completed.

* Rev. xxi. 27.

in the sight of his Judge. And then, going out, full of wine, to hunt in that New Forest of which his father had taken possession, so much after the manner of Ahab, an arrow carelessly aimed at a stag by Walter Tyrrel, one of the king's loose companions, struck Rufus in the breast, and he fell to the ground a corpse. Thus was this unhappy man cut off from the number of the living, in the thirteenth year of his reign, and the fortieth of his age; when he was in perfect health, and great prosperity; with his heart set on schemes of ambition, and on devices for indulging all his evil passions.

Aug. 2,
1100.

On seeing the king fall, Tyrrel ran up; but finding him already lifeless, he mounted his horse, rode straight off to the sea shore, and embarking, fled from England. About sun-set some countrymen found the deserted body of their sovereign, and by them it was drawn in a cart to Winchester. There it was hastily buried the next morning, without any religious ceremony; all about it seeming to fear that they should incur the guilt of direct rebellion against God, if they paid any honours to the corpse of one whom his right hand had been, almost visibly, stretched forth to smite. William Rufus had sinned after the manner of Jehoiakim, against whom the Lord testified, saying, *Thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, king of Judah, they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother, or ah my sister. They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord, or ah his glory. He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem**. Was not He who proclaimed this sentence against the king of Judah, the same King of kings

* Jer. xxii. 17. 19.

and Lord of lords, who brought to pass all that befel the king of England also?

CHAPTER III.

Reign of Henry I. surnamed Beauclerc.

HENRY, who was at this time thirty-two years of age, had made his peace with his brothers, and was hunting in another part of the New Forest when William fell. As soon as the news of the king's death reached his ears, he rode off to Winchester, to get possession of the royal treasure, as an important step towards usurping the crown. William de Breteuil, the treasurer, was also in the field; and, suspecting what might happen, he hastened to the same place. There he found Henry demanding, with many threats, the keys of the late king's coffers. De Breteuil said, He was their keeper, and that he should preserve them for duke Robert, who was now the undoubted heir to the crown; both by an elder brother's right, and by the express terms of his last treaty with William Rufus. He also bade Henry remember, that they both had sworn fidelity to Robert. As it was difficult to answer this, Henry, instead of argument, drew his sword, and threatened to kill any one who should persist in opposing him. The nobles around took his part; and, having gotten possession of the treasure, Henry repaired in haste to London, and was crowned at Westminster before the news of his brother's death had time to reach the distant barons.

Sunday, Aug. 5,
A.D. 1100.

To secure the submission of his new subjects, however, it was evidently desirable that something should be immediately done, which might make it appear

their interest to have Henry for their king. He, therefore, directly issued a *charter*, or proclamation of liberties thereby granted to the nation. By this charter he pledged himself neither to keep benefices vacant, nor sell them. Secondly, he granted to his barons and tenants permission to dispose of their personal property by will, and to give their daughters in marriage to whom they chose. Thirdly, he promised not to oblige widows to marry against their inclination; nor heiresses, but to such persons as his barons should approve. Fourthly, that sons should inherit their father's property, without having to pay a greater fine than the customary one; and that the nearest relations should be the guardians of orphans under age. Fifthly, he also promised to rule according to the laws in force under Edward the Confessor; excepting some changes made by the conqueror.

The satisfaction with which these grants were received, shows under what excessive restraints even the higher ranks of society had suffered during the reigns of the first three Norman kings. Yet on whom had the weight of these restraints fallen? Not on the noble, whilst at the head of his vassals, and capable of resisting. If the reader examines the abuses which Henry's charter pledged the king to correct, he will find, that they only interfered with property when its lord was dead, or helpless. They fell but on such as could not combat with arms against a powerful oppressor; on women, orphans, and the clergy. No wonder that the latter were tempted to set up the authority of the pope, as being a person of their own order, against such misgovernment; and that feeling the want of arms, for the protection of their rights, they taught the people to fear their curse rather than ought that violence could inflict.

Besides raising the hopes of a gentler reign by his charter, Henry sought to gain the good-will of the

Londoners, by granting them another charter, with new and peculiar privileges. He also gratified the native English by asking in marriage Matilda, the daughter of Malcolm, king of Scotland, by Margaret, sister of Edgar Atheling*. Malcolm had been slain in battle; and when the bitter news reached his widow, she is said to have exclaimed, "I thank thee, O Lord, that this great affliction is evidently sent to heal me of my sins. Deliver me from evil, O Lord Jesu Christ, who, by thy death, gavest life to the world." From such a mother, by God's blessing on her instruction and example, Matilda had received what was far more valuable than the royal Saxon blood which flowed in her veins, a pious and charitable disposition. Her behaviour, on becoming Henry's wife, made her to be long remembered amongst the English, by the affectionate name of *Molde, the good queen*†.

The king, at the same time, banished from court some of the most infamous companions of William Rufus; and imprisoned Ranulf Flambard, or *the flaming brand*, his detested minister; who having relentlessly pillaged the people, and defrauded the church, to supply William's wants, had been wickedly promoted for such services to the bishopric of Durham. Henry had also invited Anselm to return to England; and he received him with marks of the greatest affection. A difference, however, soon arose between them; the archbishop, in compliance with a late rule made by the pope, refusing to do homage to the king for the manors belonging to the see of Canterbury. This order of the pope amounted to a declaration, that he himself was the proper and only sovereign over all estates belonging to the church, in whose kingdom soever they might be situated. Had Henry suffered the clergy thus to

* See p. 266.

† *Molde*, and *Mande*, seem to have been more familiar forms of *Matilda*.

refuse doing homage for their lands, he would have lost his royal rights over nearly half his kingdom. At present, however, he was glad to defer the dispute; the archbishop consenting that a message should be sent to the pope, requesting him to reconsider a matter of such importance.

By this attention to popularity Henry was, in truth, preparing for the contest which he had to expect, with his injured brother Robert; who had now returned to Normandy, and was ready to cross the channel and claim the crown of England.

The infamous bishop Flambard having had a rope sent him, concealed in the bottom of a cask, intoxicated his keepers, and then, fastening the rope, slid down by it from the window of the tower in which he was confined. By the time he reached the ground the rope had chafed his fingers to the bone; but he got away, and fled to Duke Robert, whom he constantly kept urging to active exertions. Invitations and promises of support also reached the Duke from several of the nobility; particularly from Robert de Belesme, Earl of Shrewsbury, a very powerful baron, who was not only accustomed to murder whomsoever he would, but added such cruel devices for tormenting his victims as are too dreadful to be described. When it became known that such men as these were among the chief friends of Robert, the fear of being still farther exposed to their oppressions assisted in making the English eling to Henry. Anselm, too, had witnessed, in Normandy, the evil effects of Robert's misrule. The archbishop was most anxious to have every office in the church filled up by election; and his partialities led him to revere the popedom, which was filled up by election, as in every way superior to all other dignities whatsoever. It was therefore natural that he should consider the choice of the nobles, and the sanction of the clergy who crowned Henry, as giving the king a better title to his

throne than Robert derived from being the elder brother. But whatever course Anselm thought it right to support, he was used to do it heartily. Hence when Robert landed at Portsmouth, with an army, Anselm made himself very useful to Henry; addressing the English soldiers on the duty of remaining faithful to the oath of allegiance, which they had so lately taken; and even threatening the invaders with excommunication.

The hostile forces came in sight of each other near Winchester; but it is pleasing to relate
A.D. 1101. that the two brothers, meeting on an open spot between their armies, embraced as friends. Robert, whose dissolute life kept him always needy, consented to renounce all claim to the crown of England, for a pension of 3000 marks; which was worth about as much as 160,000*l.* a year would be now.

Henry was thus left to employ the means he had got together for the war, in breaking down the power of those nobles who were ready to have joined his brother against him. Belesme boldly bade the king defiance; and his castle of Arundel stood a siege of three months, before it could be taken. He had also fortified Shrewsbury, and garrisoned Bridgnorth with 700 men; but the natives were panting for deliverance from his atrocities, and the English in the king's army rejoiced to be employed in relieving their country from such a monster. Belesme was therefore compelled to come out of Shrewsbury on foot; and by Henry's command he quitted England for ever. That his cruelties should have gone on unpunished and unchecked, until he made the king his personal enemy, is a plain proof, that the restraints imposed by the Norman sovereigns, on their nobles, had little to do with the protection of the people.

Duke Robert finding that the nobles who had been willing to support his claims were, on that ac-

count, devoted to ruin, came at last to England unexpectedly and unattended, to intercede for the Earl of Surrey. Henry received him with the appearance of kindness; but, when he reflected that his elder brother was now in his power, the same evil suggestions entered into the mind of the king as He who knew the heart of man, ascribed to the unjust occupiers of His vineyard; who *said amongst themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours* *. Robert perceived his danger; and was glad to purchase leave to return home, by resigning the pension for which he had so lately sold his birthright.

He who is conscious of having injured a brother, by whose generosity he had benefited †, will soon begin to hate him; because he cannot think of him without feeling the pain of shame. It is not surprising, therefore, that Henry, soon after, took advantage of the complaints which the Norman nobles made of Robert's foolish government; and pretended that he felt it his duty to preserve the ancient dominions of their family from ruin. He, accordingly, crossed over into Normandy; and after a short, disgraceful war, obtained possession of his brother's person. The unhappy Duke was compelled to order his officers to surrender to Henry those fortresses which were still in their keeping; and he was then removed to England. There he passed near thirty years in captivity; and expired in Cardiff castle at the advanced age of eighty, blind, and still a prisoner.

In his youth Robert had made war on his sovereign and father; and, ignorant as he was, he could not but have known that all nature cries out against such an offence. But, *because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, there-*

* Mark xii. 7.

† See p. 291.

*fore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil**; and thus Robert added to the sins of his youth a dissolute manhood. But the wicked are often made to fulfil upon each other the righteous judgments of God; and the cruelty of a brother whom Robert, in the day of his power, had spared, gave additional bitterness to the sentence which was executed on him to the letter; *Whoso curseth his father, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness*†.

It was a chaplain of the king, Galdric by name, who took duke Robert prisoner on the field of battle. For thus disgracefully exhibiting himself as a man of blood, a partaker with robbers who had gone forth to steal a province, a combatant in the unnatural war between brothers, Galdric was made, by Henry, Bishop of Llandaff. Flambard too, for acting the traitor to Robert; was restored to the wealthy bishopric of Durham. Another prelate was raised to his important office for the indecent haste with which he got through the celebration of the mass. It must be remembered, that the mass was fully believed by the ignorant priests and people of this age to be a fresh sacrifice for their sins; so that persons paying the priest for it, thought they had the sacrifice of the Lord's body offered anew for their special benefit. Under this notion Henry, and some officers with him, had entered a church in Normandy; and desired the priest to perform mass. He began and finished the service with a rapidity which astonished them; and they all exclaimed, This was the fit chaplain for soldiers, who could not be long over their prayers. How dreadful was the irreverence of the priest, who could hurry on through a sacrament, which he had been taught to think would bring down the Son of God bodily upon the altar before

Eccles. viii. 11.

† Prov. xx. 20.

him; and how deplorable was the blindness which suffered Henry and his companions to imagine, that the weight of their sins would be diminished, by their being present as impatient bystanders whilst God was thus mocked! Henry bade the priest follow him; and this blind leader of the blind, proving a ready scholar in such worldly wisdom as his new master valued, became, in time, Chancellor of England; and received the bishopric of Salisbury as the wages of his service.

The selection of such persons, by a king much less grossly ignorant than Rufus, naturally made Anselm more anxious than ever, that bishoprics should not be permitted to continue at the disposal of worldly sovereigns. For Anselm read that a bishop should be *blameless, as the steward of God, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught**. Whereas the archbishop could not but perceive, that the man preferred by kings, unless during some short fit of terror, was generally chosen as if in direct contempt of the apostle's words; being one *given to wine, or a striker, or given to filthy lucre*, and utterly unable to *exhort with sound doctrine, or to convince gainsayers*. But the archbishop had himself been in an ill school during his abode at Rome. He had been injured by the flattery he there met with. In mixing up with the question of appointment of bishops, a refusal to pay the king such homage for his lands as the law required from all subjects, he was grievously misled by the popes, who, *making the word of God of none effect through their tradition*†, entirely perverted the command which saith, *Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's*‡.

When the terror of Robert's invasion was gone by, the king showed no disposition to attend to the

* Tit. i. 6. 9.

† Mark vii. 13.

‡ Ibid. xii. 17.

letter, which his messengers had brought back from Rome. Indeed it was full of such misapplications of Scripture as were too foolish to impose on a monarch of his understanding. After some discussion he declared positively, to Anselm, "I will allow no subject in my dominions to refuse me his homage." And in a parliament held at Winchester, it was farther agreed that three bishops should be sent to Rome; and should tell the pope, that if he persisted in denying the king's right to investiture*, and homage, they would banish Anselm; withdraw their subjection to the see of Rome; and withhold the payments usually sent there. With these ambassadors Anselm also sent two monks, as his messengers.

The pope of that day, Paschal II. was alarmed by this plain language; but he had had the very same dispute to maintain with the Emperor of Germany. He therefore told the English ambassadors, that as their king was, in other respects, a very excellent person, he would overlook Henry's proceeding as he chose, in these matters, within his own territories; but that he could not surrender the claims of the church in writing; as he must, otherwise, make the same concessions to every sovereign, who chose to ask for them. On the other hand, the artful pope gave, at the same time, to the messengers of Anselm letters under his seal; in which he exhorted the archbishop to persevere, and promised to support him with all his power. Both parties made their report before a parliament assembled in London. The double-dealing of the pope then came to light; but it seemed so exceedingly wicked, and the notion that he was to be revered as the living representative of Christ on earth had got such strong hold of men's minds, that many could not believe he had acted, or spoken, as

A.D.
1102.

* See p. 273.

the reporters affirmed. Instead, therefore, of casting off the papal authority, it was agreed to send again to Rome for farther explanation.

In this manner the question was kept unsettled for some years. The pope excommunicated the ministers of Henry, and threatened the king himself with the same punishment. He said, A.D. 1105. with regard to investitures, that Christianity was at an end, if kings were allowed to put the staff, the token of his pastoral office, into a bishop's hands; and the ring, the pledge of fidelity to the church, on his fingers. In the performance of homage the hands of a vassal were placed between those of his lord; and a council, held in the last year of Urban's papacy, had declared, that it was horrible to think of placing the hands of a priest, "who could create his Creator," between the polluted and blood-stained fingers of temporal rulers. In such shockingly profane language did the heads of this corrupt church speak of the power, which they falsely ascribed to priests, of making the bread and wine in the Lord's supper to become the actual flesh and blood of Him, *by whom were all things created* *. At length, however, the pope came to the same compromise with Henry as with other sovereigns. A.D. 1107. The king gave up his claim to presenting the staff and ring at investiture; whilst the pope consented, that the clergy should perform homage, before receiving possession of the estates attached to their preferment. The important power of naming bishops and abbots, to fill up vacancies, was still left in the king's hands.

Henry had probably not carried on this dispute without some superstitious fears of the consequences of resisting the head of the church; and, by way of making up for it, he joined Anselm in procuring the enactment of laws to force the inferior clergy to re-

main single. Married persons in orders, even
A.D. of the lowest rank, were commanded to put
1108. away their wives without delay; and such as
should refuse were to be deprived of any preferment
they might possess; their goods were to be forfeit-
ed; and their wives condemned to slavery. When
we find such a man as Anselm approving of this, it
should constrain us to acknowledge, that if we are
free from the grievous prejudices which led him
astray, we owe it entirely to the goodness of God in
dispelling the thick clouds of error which then sur-
rounded every man from his birth, and obscured the
light of the Gospel even to this zealous enquirer.

As to the immediate effects of these laws against
the married clergy, they were far from being what
the archbishop desired. When Henry found what
numbers would suffer from their being enforced, he
attempted to gain popularity and raise money at the
same time; by selling licences to marry, and exemp-
tions from the penalties of the law, to as many priests
as could afford to pay the price he set upon them.
Later in his reign the sons of the married clergy
were so numerous, that a special law was thought
necessary, to prevent their taking possession of their
father's benefices as an inheritance; whilst the pope
confessed, that the best of the parochial clergy were
the offspring of those marriages, which he yet per-
sisted in declaring to be offensive in the sight of
heaven.

In 1126 the court of Rome sent over a legate to
preside at a national council held at Westminster,
and to urge it to still more effectual measures against
the marriages of the clergy. This legate was an
Italian, John of Crema by name. His presiding, as
the deputy of the pope, over a council held in Eng-
land, was an encroachment upon the rights of the
king and of the nation, to which Henry had for a
long time refused to submit. But the employment
of this foreigner ended most disgracefully to him-

self. For, whereas he came *forbidding to marry**, and pretending to such excessive purity as would not even allow him to consent to that Scripture which saith, *Marriage is honourable in all*†; he was found out to be one who privily indulged in such uncleanness, as the same Scripture declareth expressly, *God will judge*.

About this time the popes took one farther and very considerable step towards gaining supreme power over the clergy. By allowing the bishops to do homage, they had permitted them to promise fidelity to their king. But to counterbalance this the papal court imposed a new oath on the bishops; whereby they were made to swear, that they would pay obedience to the pope and his successors. In the frequent case of opposite commands being issued by the pope and king, the bishops were thus henceforward reduced to the necessity of breaking their oath of obedience towards either the one or the other. But, if they disobeyed the king to serve the pope, they believed the pope able, and might be sure he was willing, to pardon such a sin. Whereas, if they disobeyed the pope to serve the king, they would thereby offend the very person of whom they believed that he had power to decide on what terms alone they could hope for forgiveness; and who might leave them to die in despair of mercy. It is probable that the king of England never knew that such an oath had been required from any of his subjects. The popes were *wise as serpents* in imposing it; but how far from being *harmless as doves*‡!

Henry had some taste for letters, enough to procure for him, in that age, the surname of Beauclerc, or *fine scholar*; and certainly enough to give him a reflecting turn of mind. It was therefore next to impossible, that he should not be made a worse man

* 1 Tim. iv. 3.

† Heb. xiii. 4.

‡ Matt. x. 16.

by the disputes with ecclesiastics, which occupied so much of his attention. For when he saw a devout man like Anselm contending for the authority of the pope, as for his life; and at the same time found the pope, and his agents, to be constantly bent on gaining more and more of worldly power, he must either have concluded that all religion was hypocrisy, or that submission to forms and rules was a more material part of religion than hatred of sin and love of God.

After the manner of the pope, who was held up to him as an object of respect, Henry governed his own people without any regard to the promises he had made in his charter; but he is said to have been usefully severe against thieves, coiners of light money, and idle followers of his court. Yet so late as the thirty-fourth year of his reign robberies were still so frequent, that at one assize, held in Leicestershire, there were no less than forty-four robbers found guilty and executed. It is also acknowledged, that the frauds practised by those who had the king's licence for coining went on increasing, up to the same date; when, it being found that scarcely one coin out of twelve was good money, the coiners were summoned to appear before the treasurer, at Winchester; and of fifty, there examined, only two escaped being condemned to lose one hand, or an eye. As to the mischief done by the train of court followers, it proceeded from their abuse of a right claimed by the kings in those days, who, whenever and wherever they travelled, expected themselves and their company to be supplied, free of cost, with all things needful, by the district through which they passed. The crowd of servants in the employ of the king, and of the nobles and prelates who attended him, took advantage of this; and made, what was in itself an oppressive privilege, to become quite intolerable. They were accustomed to enter the houses of farmers and husbandmen, using what they

liked; carrying off both coin and cattle; and behaving, altogether, as if they were victorious soldiers in an enemy's land. The consequence was, that the approach of the king and his train was dreaded like that of an hostile army; and became a signal for the countrymen to hide all the property they could, and flee into the woods. The sight of villages thus deserted convinced the king, at length, that the evil must be checked; and he appointed judges to enquire into the mischief done by his attendants, and to punish the guilty, on the spot, with loss of limb. These bloody punishments occasioned Henry to be complimented with the title of "The Lion of Justice." But, like the lion, he was himself a greater plunderer than any of those marauders whom he destroyed. In every dispute he employed bribes to corrupt the persons he had to deal with, or those entrusted by them; and the greater part of the money wanted for this iniquitous purpose was drained from his subjects as wrongfully as it was spent. In making his demands he cared for no law. Whoever was known to have riches, and to be too weak to defend them against the king, was compelled to pay whatever might be asked by the officers of the treasury.

As to the wars in which this king was engaged, except that by which he robbed his brother of Normandy, they were of little consequence to his subjects, and of none to posterity. Yet the memory of an unimportant measure which followed one of them has been singularly preserved. He had invaded South Wales; and meeting with but slight opposition, he gave away a small district near Haverford to a colony of Flemings, or natives of Flanders; whom circumstances, not altogether known, had driven from their own country. These Flemings talking a different language, and having different habits from the natives, kept separate from the Welch, though entirely surrounded by them; and

seven hundred years, which have since elapsed, have not entirely destroyed the peculiarities which distinguish the descendants of this handful of foreigners from their neighbours.

The events which occurred in another of these petty wars, singularly mark the barbarity of the times, and of the man. Eustace, lord of Breteuil, who had dispossessed the lawful heir of honest William de Breteuil *, and usurped his inheritance, was married to Juliana, a base-born daughter of king Henry; and had requested, of his father-in-law, the command of a certain strong fortress. Henry promised that he should have it, at the close of a war then going on. But, as the want of any virtuous principle, of which all the parties concerned were conscious, made each unwilling to trust the other, the king required that two daughters of Eustace, being in fact his own grand-children, should be delivered into his hands, as hostages for the fidelity of their father. He at the same time desired Harenc, governor of the fortress, to send his son to Eustace, as a hostage for the surrender of the castle to that nobleman according to promise. When the expected time came Eustace hastily concluded, that the place would not be put into his possession; and, in his rage, he tore out the eyes of the son of Harenc; and then sent the injured boy back, to make his father miserable. When the news reached Henry, he ordered the like barbarous cruelty to be executed on the two girls, his hostages; being unmoved by their innocence of what had angered him, by the helplessness of their tender years, and by his own blood flowing in their veins. After this he marched an army into Eustace's territories, and besieged Breteuil. Eustace himself had fled, but his wife Juliana remained, and she requested a parley with her father. On hearing this he approached

* See p. 316.

the wall; and the miserable woman, who was *as a bear robbed of her whelps*, instantly discharged an arrow, from a cross bow, full at his heart; but her agitation, or want of skill, saved her from being her father's murderer. Henry pressed the siege; and, when the place could no longer be defended, he refused to accept her surrender, but on condition of her descending from the wall of the fortress, and crossing the ditch; humbled, and exposed to the taunts of his soldiery, as she waded through the mud, breaking the ice at every step.

It was impossible that any prosperity could make such a man happy; for the Scripture says, *He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh* *. The hardness of Henry's heart, and his treachery, kept his servants and ministers in terror. His great justiciary, Bloet, bishop of Lincoln, burst into tears, when he was told the king had been loud in his praise. "I know him well," said he, "the king never speaks thus, but of the man he intends to ruin, and wishes to put off his guard." The poorest good man may have a friend. This king could not. He knew, none who approached him could love him; he feared that all his servants must hate him. Hence he dared not to move, or even to rest unarmed. He frequently changed his bed; that it might not be known where he could be found asleep. Guards were stationed to watch all night near his chamber door. And as he could not tell but they might prove faithless, he was farther provided with a sword and shield, placed near his pillow; where-with, if necessary, he might defend himself against any attempt upon his life from them. But he would doubtless reflect, that this last precaution could avail him little, unless he took care never to indulge in a deep sleep. Who, that enjoys unbroken rest,

* Prov. xi. 17.

would not pity such a king, even if there were no other world?

The loneliness of the man who is so closed up in self, as to be incapable either of loving or being loved, is dreary indeed. But there was one person, for whom the heart of Henry warmed with the glow of passionate affection. This was William; his only lawful son; and therefore the heir to his kingdom. Many a sin had the king committed, that he might leave to this son ample power and extensive dominion. Regarding him not only as his child, but as one whose greatness would be of his making, Henry idolized the youth to such a degree as to be insensible to his faults; though the unhappy young prince was proud and haughty, and given to the grossest wickedness; being already stained with such vices as form the last stage, in the degradation of those who are *lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God* *.

The prospect of Henry's being followed by such a successor, must have been every way alarming to the English. For, in the folly of his pride, William had said aloud, That if ever he came to be their king, he would fasten them to their ploughs, and make them draw like beasts of burden. But to make the succession so secure that nothing might disturb it, Henry devised the expedient of making both the English and Norman nobility take their oaths of fidelity to his son, during his own lifetime. The King of France indeed, who had a right to interfere as sovereign lord over the Norman territories within his kingdom, had insisted that another William, the son of Duke Robert, should inherit his father's duchy. But king Henry obliged him, and persuaded the pope, to give up their support of the rightful heir. The fatigues and anxiety of this dis-

* 2 Tim. iii. 4.

pute, which had kept the king abroad four years, being brought to the desired close, he and the prince prepared for returning to England ; triumphant, and full of all worldly prosperity.

At Barfleur, the place of embarkation, Henry was addressed by Fitz-Stephen, a Norman mariner, who said that his father had carried over the father of the king, when he sailed to the conquest of England. That he was now master of a gallant vessel, called the White Ship ; and that the conqueror had made it the privilege of his family to convey his sovereign from the Norman to the English shore. The king was pleased with the man's claim ; and said, he had chosen his own vessel already ; but that Fitz-Stephen should carry his treasures and his son.

At twilight the king sailed, and the prince was already aboard the White Ship ; which Nov. 26,
1120. had been provided with fifty stout rowers. In William's company were Richard, and Adela, also children of Henry, but base-born. There were besides, the earl of Chester and his countess, the king's niece ; and 16 daughters and 140 sons of nobles of English and Norman families : the corrupt and merry companions of the dissolute young prince. They spent some hours on deck, in feasting and dancing, and distributed three barrels of wine among the sailors ; so that the riot and intoxication which prevailed, even before they had loosed from the shore, alarmed such as had enough prudence left into quitting the vessel. The rest went off in her that evening, and William bade Fitz-Stephen and the rowers do their best to overtake the king. Every sail was set, and every oar on the stretch, when the drunken helmsman ran the White Ship on a rock, covered, at that hour, by the tide. The blow burst the side of the vessel, and the sea rushed in upon the terrified revellers. Fitz-Stephen hurried the prince into a boat, and had got

clear of the sinking ship, when William heard his sister's screams, and insisted on returning to her help. They did so, and such numbers leapt in, that the boat immediately foundered.

In a few minutes more the White Ship went down; and 300 souls were hurried into the presence of that God, who hath warned all men that *the abominable and the dissolute shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone* *. On most of them He had been showering down benefits from the moment of their birth, such as very few of their fellow-creatures enjoyed. In return for this, He had but required their love; and that they would turn to Him, and ask to receive more and greater things from His bounty; but every good bestowed had made them hate His holy laws the more; and every gift received had been abused in defiance of the long-suffering giver.

As the vessel had sunk in shallow water, when it righted, part of the mast rose above the waves. One young nobleman, and Berold, a butcher of Rouen, reached and clung to it. A few minutes afterwards Fitz-Stephen swam towards them, and asked "Is the prince there?" Being answered, "No;" he plunged his head under the water and disappeared. The nobleman, finding his strength fail from cold and weariness, uttered a prayer for his companion's preservation, and then lost his hold, and dropt into the sea. The hardier butcher, wrapt in his garment of sheep-skin, kept his place till the morning, when he was descried and taken off by some fishermen; to whom he told the sad history of the wreck.

King Henry had arrived safe at Southampton; and expressed his surprise, as vessel after vessel came in, that the White Ship was not yet to be seen. The first persons, who heard what had hap-

* Rev. xxi. 8.

pened, dreaded to inform him; and, at last, a little boy was sent into the king's apartment, to tell him his loss. On hearing it Henry fell speechless to the ground. His courtiers came in, and raised him up; but, as long as he lived, he was never seen to smile again.

Duke Robert was now in this respect happier than his powerful brother; that his son William was still alive; and that the hours of his captivity were cheered with accounts of that young man's virtues and rising reputation. Had Henry released his injured brother, and acknowledged William as the lawful male heir both of the kingdom and duchy, and adopted this virtuous nephew instead of his lost son, he himself might yet have known happiness again; and the blow lately inflicted on him would have proved an act of mercy, and not of wrath. But, though heart-broken, the king of England turned not to the only refuge of the wretched. Because he knew the Normans loved the youth; and feared he might be compelled by his subjects to acknowledge him as his heir, he hated the young man, and sought his life; hunting him from place to place. At length, however, William obtained the great earldom of Flanders, and this not by bloodshed, but as a gift; which the king of France bestowed upon him, from pity for his misfortunes, and respect for his high character. His predecessor in the earldom had been murdered; and earl William endeavouring to bring the murderers to justice, received a slight wound, which in a short time brought
A.D. 1128.
on his death. It is said, that he wrote from his sick bed to his uncle, the king of England; begging his forgiveness for the uneasiness he had occasioned him; and intreating that he would pardon and favour the faithful Norman noble, Helie de St. Saen, who had been his guardian, and had angered the king by refusing to surrender his ward.

If such a letter was written, we have indeed here

clear of the sinking ship, when William's sister's screams, and insisted on receiving help. They did so, and such was the result that the boat immediately foundered.

In a few minutes more the king was down; and 300 souls were hurried

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MATILDA, SON OF ROBERT.

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mother. In the year 1100, Henry had married her to Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, in France. This marriage was not a little happiness. Geoffrey was a very ungrateful; and she, having the title of Countess, and being the heiress of England and Normandy, thought him beneath her. Yet her father, who was king of France, succeeded to the English throne, as Henry did not but foresee, were very likely to be disappointed. For neither the Saxon nor the Norman crown had ever been worn as yet but by men; and the English had hitherto, as in the case of Henry himself, made no scruple of rejecting the heir at law for any more popular claimant to the succession of their monarchs.

To obtain therefore a formal and solemn acknowledgment of consent to his daughter's claims, Henry called together a great council, or parliament. In it he reminded the English that Matilda was descended, by her mother, from the line of Saxon kings; from Alfred and Egbert. At the same time, he bade the Normans observe, that she

Dec.
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claims to each inheritance; and that if her, England and Normandy would be. His reasons, and his authority were. The empress was declared her's territories; and first the laity, swore to maintain her

1, King of Scotland, her th first. The honor of his fidelity in the same tween Stephen Earl of Gloucester; the

Henry, the latter his probable that each, in de- nearer the throne than the forward to the time when, in direct the oath now taken, he might himself the crown; as confessedly the next male in succession, and therefore preferable by antient custom to any female claimant.

Of the remaining portion of Henry's life the greater part was passed on the continent; where he was harassed, and occupied, with the quarrels between Maude and her husband, to whom however she bare three sons; Henry, Geoffry, and William Plantagenet. By this name the family of Anjou had begun to be known; in consequence of their choosing a twig, or plant of broom, called in French *genest*, for their badge. A simple crest, which plucked in the field, and worn on the helmet, was a ready way of marking their partizans.

After a reign of 35 years, being in the 67th year of his age, the king died in France; from a fever brought on by eating to excess of a dish of lampreys, at the close of a day spent in hunting.

When we look back at what has been recorded of this reign, it is surely impossible not to feel thankful that our lot has been cast in the present

WILLIAM, SON OF ROBERT.
inform him; and, at last, a little
king's apartment, to tell him
Henry fell speechless to the
ground, and raised him up;
ever seen to smile
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age, rather than in one of such iniquity and oppression, that the comforts of a tranquil life could scarcely be known to any. But the general neglect of the word of God was much more calamitous to that unhappy generation; not only corrupting His service, but leaving men to fall back into their natural ignorance of the distinctions between right and wrong, and their natural indifference to the guilt of sin. This is strongly exemplified in the language of William of Malmesbury, an historian of that day, who does not hesitate to praise king Henry for his temperance; though the king had no less than fifteen base-born children, who grew up living proofs of his adulterous life; and though he died at last from the consequences of gluttony. Yet this writer was neither deficient in common sense, nor honesty. The same historian, with the same utter want of spiritual light, praises Henry for his piety, because he built monasteries in England and Normandy.

If such works were proofs of piety, bishop Flambard of Durham, and Roger of Salisbury, the hurrying priest, were also pious men. For the former built the massy nave of Durham cathedral; and the latter built a cathedral at Sarum, now destroyed.

Indeed the Normans, valuing fame more than money, had a spirit of magnificence which made them far more sumptuous in their buildings than the Saxons had ever been. The works of this age, which remain, are very massive; but have not much beauty. They may be known by the hugeness of the pillars, in naves of churches, and the circular arches which rest upon them*. But when people

* Besides nearly the whole of Durham, more or less considerable portions of the present cathedrals of Canterbury, Winchester, Ely, Gloucester, Hereford, Lincoln, Oxford, and Winchester, were built at this period. The ruins of Malling, Buildwas, Wenlock, Dunstable, Malmesbury, Byland, and Lanercost abbies, are also in the early Norman style.

speaking of such buildings, as proofs of the piety of our ancestors, they would do well to remember, that a belief in God, which trembles in expectation of His just wrath against outrageous guilt, and would bribe Him with gifts, but feels no warmth of love, no longing to be made like unto Him in holiness, is not piety*.

Yet even then the mercy of God slept not. We have seen how the attempt of duke Robert, to put in force his claims on the English crown, was beneficial to the nation in a way which he neither intended, nor devised; by making Henry exert himself to put down those cruel and powerful chieftains, whose tyranny, being exercised in so many different places, was producing much more extensive misery than the occasional injustice of the king alone.

Again, it was evidently neither the wisdom of the people, nor the goodness of Henry which led him to give the nation his charter. And though he so completely neglected the promises which it contained, that his gift seemed but an useless one, yet it was most important in its consequences. For it put into the minds of those who followed that generation to claim, and endeavour to secure, those privileges which, as they knew, had once been granted.

And whilst the effect of the king's extortions, and of the oppressions of his barons, soon passed away, the blessings of God on the benevolence and charitable labours of a single abbot, and of four of his monks, produced consequences beyond all hope or calculation.

Joffred, abbot of Croyland, was one of those learned priests whom William the Conqueror's discerning patronage brought over from Normandy. His love of knowledge had made him collect bre-

* James ii. 19.

thren for his monastery who were of the like disposition; and he had fixed four of these amongst his tenants at Cotenham, to instruct their sons. But these monks, finding pleasure in the communication of what they knew, hired a barn in the larger neighbouring town of Cambridge, where they might expect to find more persons willing to be instructed. Their zeal and their superior knowledge soon gained them a reputation; and as their fame spread, scholars resorted to them from places more and more distant.

In the second year of their teaching at Cambridge, they had divided and arranged their labours. Brother Odo began the morning with teaching the Latin grammar. Terric taught logic, or the art of reasoning. William gave instructions in rhetoric, or the art of speaking well and persuasively; and Gislebert, the fourth brother, gave religious instruction, and preached to the people on Sundays and holidays. Scholars being thus drawn to Cambridge, other teachers also fixed their abode there; and thus the University is supposed to have had its beginning. Peter de Blois, an author who wrote but ninety years after, exclaims, 'From this little fountain, which hath swelled into a great river, we now behold the city of God made glad; and all England rendered fruitful, by many teachers issuing from Cambridge.'

How much more abundantly, and how much more clear, have the waters of this fountain since been made to flow by the bounty of Him, who alone can give *the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord* *! He saith of Himself, *In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom* †. To Him, therefore, be given the praise, when the members of that university rejoice that it has produced Bacon and

* Isa. xi. 2.

† Exod. xxxi. 6.

Newton, names unequalled in human wisdom ; and Milton, who has sung so sweetly and so well of the mercy of God and our Redeemer. Yet the instruction which raised up in the same University those holy bishops, Ridley, and Latimer, and Cranmer, and many a brother-martyr, was blessed with a still choicer blessing ; for the light, which they were made the instruments of pouring on this land, was far more glorious than the discoveries of human wisdom. The writer cannot bring himself to close his reflections, on the goodness of God in preparing a place for the instruction of those chosen servants, without uttering his own feelings and wishes in the devout and affectionate language of Bishop Ridley. ' Cambridge, my loving mother, and tender nurse ! If I should not acknowledge thy manifold benefits ; yea if I should not, for thy benefits, at the least love thee again, truly I were to be accounted ungrateful and unkind. I thank thee, my loving mother ; and I pray God, that His laws, and the sincere Gospel of Christ, may ever be truly taught, and faithfully learned in thee.'

CHAPTER IV.

Reign of King Stephen.

ADELA, daughter of the Conqueror, was married to the Earl of Blois, in France, and bare him four sons. The eldest married an heiress ; and, living upon her domains, permitted his second brother to have their father's earldom for his inheritance. Stephen and Henry, the two youngest, were richly provided for by their uncle, the late king of England. To his namesake, Henry, the king had given first, the wealthy abbey of Glastonbury ; and then, the bishopric of Winchester. To Stephen he had given

an earldom in Normandy, and large estates in England. The king had also obtained for him, in marriage, the daughter and heiress of Eustace, Earl of Boulogne. But no sooner was king Henry dead, than these two ungrateful and faithless brothers conspired to supplant their cousin, his daughter; whose claims to the inheritance of her father's dominions, they and all the chief nobility and clergy, both of England and Normandy, had thrice solemnly sworn to acknowledge and maintain.

As soon as he heard that his uncle had expired, Stephen sailed for England; and though the inhabitants of Dover and Canterbury, guessing his purpose, refused to receive him within their walls, he was welcomed by the citizens of London. A good-humoured affable manner had enabled Stephen to win the favour of many, whilst he was living in Henry's court, as a powerful nobleman, nearly related to the king. This popularity, the artful management of his brother, the bishop of Winchester, and the hopes which his supporters might form of being prodigally rewarded, were Stephen's only grounds for expecting to obtain the crown of England. For, though he might be disposed to urge, that a male descendant of the Conqueror had a right to be preferred, by the ordinary custom of succession, before any female; yet if that were allowed, the right belonged to his elder brother, not to himself. Hitherto, indeed, the rights of inheritance had not been regarded as extending farther than this:—that the nation, in choosing their sovereign, ought to keep to the royal family, and that the next heir should succeed; without some strong reason to the contrary. But the oaths of fidelity to the Empress Matilda, taken in the life-time of her father, made it impossible for the heads of the nation to proceed to the choice of any other sovereign, without being guilty of direct perjury.

Nevertheless, the Bishop of Winchester gained

over William, Archbishop of Canterbury, by promises of the great things which his brother would do for the Church. Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, and William Pont de larche, keepers of the treasure, were probably led by some baser motive to surrender the keys of the late king's amply stored coffers; and thus enabled Stephen to purchase the aid of as many others as were mean enough to take his bribes.

In short, these three bishops, and a small body of nobility, having boldly proceeded to crown Stephen, he was accepted by the Dec. 22.
1135. rest of the nation without much difficulty.

Normandy followed the example of England. The principal parties concerned made various excuses for their conduct, either to satisfy their own consciences, or to justify themselves to others. Thus the Bishop of Salisbury pretended to think that the oaths taken to Matilda were not binding, because the late king, his benefactor, who had certainly sinned heavily in promoting him *, had broken some promise respecting her marriage. The Archbishop of Canterbury discovered that, in swearing to receive a woman for his sovereign, he had sworn to what was unfit to be permitted. By such miserable reasonings do men, who have no hatred of sin, but only some fear of its consequences, ever deceive themselves. A bolder sinner, Hugh Bigod, steward of the royal household, added to his guilt by solemnly asserting a most gross falsehood;—that the late king had changed his mind on his death-bed, disinherited his daughter, and named Stephen for his successor. The pope, with wickedness as shameless as his, sent letters confirming the choice which had been made, and declaring that he knew the wishes of the prelates in favour of Stephen to have proceeded from the suggestions of divine grace.

* See p. 323.

To obtain the good will of the nation, Stephen granted a charter, in which he speaks of himself as "elected king of England by consent of the clergy and the people." Like Henry, he made his promises but to break them; yet they shew what were supposed to be the desires of the different classes of men, to whom these promises were made. To the people at large the king gave back the lands which Henry had thrown into the royal forests. To the clergy he made a very mischievous concession; whereby he gave up to the bishops all jurisdiction and power over all persons in orders, and over their property.

For three years affairs went on tolerably smoothly. Even Geoffry, the husband of Matilda, was pacified by a pension of 5000 marks, equal in value to about 90,000*l.* a year at present. David, king of Scotland, who had invaded England to support the cause of his niece Matilda, was bought off by the cession of Cumberland, and by a grant of the towns of Huntingdon and Doncaster, as estates for his son. But this way of buying off enemies, tempted many more to try what they could gain by forcing the king to purchase their forbearance. Where so many favours were asked, all could not be gratified; and the ill humour thence arising was greatly increased by Stephen's carelessness in promising to comply with requests which he sometimes had no intention, and at others not the power to satisfy. Hence feuds burst out in every quarter, till nearly the whole country was in a state of rebellion. "They chose me for their king," said Stephen, "why are they all deserting me?" He was conscious that he still retained those qualities which had first made him popular. He feasted his courtiers sumptuously; and he was generous, and affable, and cheerful, and of an easy temper. But, unhappily, he himself taught his subjects to despise alike the obligation of gratitude and oaths of fidelity, whenever

the breach of them appeared likely to be more profitable than the observance.

Believing no one to be sincere, the king turned his anger upon men who had not yet taken arms against him. And certainly there was not any person more deserving to have his protestations of fidelity disbelieved, than Roger Bishop of Salisbury. Henry had not only raised this man, from poverty and obscurity, to those high honors which he so ill deserved; but as if this were not enough, he had given him the bishoprics of Lincoln and Ely, for his base-born son and nephew. It was by a most just retribution, that Henry was repaid with such foul ingratitude, for having himself been so ungrateful to his heavenly king and benefactor, as to make of these men shepherds over the flock for which Christ died. But Stephen could place no confidence in the friendliness of men, who had been amongst the foremost to betray the cause of their benefactor's family. Bishop Roger had collected immense wealth; and he was now employing it in building and fortifying strong castles at Sarum, Sherborne, Devizes, and Malmesbury. When, therefore, it became known that the Empress Matilda was coming to England, men naturally conjectured that the Bishop was preparing for a severe contest; and the king determined not to leave so much power in so very doubtful hands. The three bishops, of Salisbury, Lincoln, and Ely, were invited to attend a council at Oxford. They were none of them such as knew how to rule their own households*; and a fray arose, between their rude followers and those of the Earl of Brittany, in which some soldiers were slain. Of this the king took advantage; and had the Bishops ^{June 27,} ^{1139.} of Salisbury and Lincoln arrested. The Bishop of Ely escaped to Devizes; and, trusting to the strength of the castle, prepared to defend it

against his sovereign. But on the third day his uncle, Bishop Roger, appeared under the walls, pale and weak; and told him, that the king had sworn he should be allowed no food till every one of his fortresses was surrendered. On this the gates of the castle were opened to the king's officers, who found within it no less than 40,000 marks of silver; that is four times as much as Duke Robert had asked for mortgaging Normandy, the native country of Bishop Roger. Such wealth too plainly proved that its owner had served mammon, and forgot the word of God, which saith *Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high**! This woe now fell upon the Bishop of Salisbury in all its bitterness. Having set his affec-

Dec. 11, 1139. tions wholly on things below, on the earth, the loss of his riches broke his heart, so that he

died shortly after. And though his last thoughts were occupied with a device for saving the remainder of his wealth from Stephen's grasp, by placing it on the altar as a gift made to the church, he had the grief of knowing even before he expired that the king had already seized upon them.

In the meanwhile the Bishop of Winchester had been exceedingly offended by the arrest of his brother prelates. The pope had lately appointed him his legate; by which commission he was made the head and protector of the English church. For whilst the popes threw all Europe into confusion to make the clergy independent of their kings, it was but to make that body depend upon the papal authority instead. To bring about this last object it had been the policy of the papal court, among other expedients, to bring both bishops and archbishops to a persuasion, that their power was not founded on the laws or customs of their respective nations, but proceeded wholly from the pope; and might be

* Hab. ii. 9.

abridged or increased at his good pleasure. For this purpose some Archbishops of Canterbury had been induced to accept a commission, appointing them legates, or deputies of the pope, as that title was now taken to mean; whereby a notion got established that the pope could give them such powers, over the English clergy, as the law of the land did not. And now by way of advancing a step farther, the pope named the Bishop of Winchester his legate; that he might have it acknowledged that he could separate from the archbishopric the authority which he had given, and could give to an inferior prelate that superiority which the laws and customs of England assigned to the Archbishop of Canterbury. In the choice of the Bishop of Winchester the pope acted with consummate worldly prudence; for he thus fixed on a man whose pride would tempt him to stretch the limits of this doubtful authority to the utmost, and whose rank and influence enabled him to play a very important part.

In fact this ambitious prelate aspired to reigning as completely over the clergy of England, as he was willing that his brother Stephen should over the laity. But this design was quite broken by the king's proceedings against Bishop Roger and his kinsmen. If Stephen could not be brought to acknowledge that he had acted improperly and illegally, it was evident that the privileges, promised in his charter to the clergy, were mere words. To intimidate the king, therefore, the legate boldly summoned him to appear at Winchester before an assembly of bishops, and give an account of his late conduct. It could scarcely have been expected that Stephen would thus come, to be tried by his subjects. The legate however, addressed the assembly, and bade them inflict upon the king such a sentence as they should think fit; promising that he himself would not shrink from executing it, either from partiality to the king his brother, or from fear of losing his property, or life.

On the other hand, Alberic de Vere spoke in the king's behalf. He observed that, by the canon law *, bishops were forbidden to fortify castles ; and that, by the rules of civil government, every subject ought to surrender the keys of any fortified place within the king's dominions, at his command. If therefore the arrested bishops complained as ecclesiastics, that the king had violated the laws of the church ; they, whose peculiar duty it was to obey those laws, had been the first to break them. If they complained as possessors of castles ; they must in that capacity, be content to submit to what was required from other holders of fortified places. After some

debates the assembly broke up, without
 Sep. 1, obtaining any further satisfaction from the
 1139. king. The legate next tried whether he
 could prevail on his brother, by any entreaties, again to declare the clergy exempt from all jurisdiction but that of the bishops. Being unsuccessful in this attempt also, he resolved to watch his opportunity ; and to see, whether the approaching civil war would not enable him to make a better bargain, with one party or the other. Matilda landed, Sep. 30th, with but 140 knights to assist her in driving Stephen from the throne ; but she had an able, and unwearied ally, in her father's base-born son, Robert Earl of Gloucester. Her uncle David, King of Scotland, also took the field a second time in her favor ; invading England with an army of his subjects. They desolated the country like a horde of savages, as far as York ; but were then driven back with great slaughter. Before, however, the campaign began, Matilda went by invitation to Arundel Castle, the residence of her stepmother, the widow of Henry I. The next day Stephen also arrived, and was admitted within the walls. But, whether in consequence of some pledge, given by him to the Queen

* See p. 131 ; note.

before his admission, or by the treacherous advice of his brother the Bishop, Matilda was allowed, rather unaccountably, to depart and cross the country, under the legate's care, to the head quarters of the Earl of Gloucester.

The civil war which followed continued for fourteen years.

Before it had gone on many months, Stephen himself was taken prisoner by the Earl of Gloucester, in a great battle fought near Lincoln. Feb. 2,
1141. Matilda ordered him to be confined in Bristol castle, and loaded with chains. The legate then joined her party. She promised to give him the first place in her councils, and to trust him with the disposal of vacant abbeys and bishoprics. In return he set the crown upon her head, at Winchester; and pronounced an awful curse against all who should resist her. At an assembly of prelates and abbots, held the following April, he declared, that his brother's captivity had convinced him of the duty of giving up a king with whom heaven was plainly wroth. He farther told them, that to the clergy, principally, belonged the right of choosing a king, and of crowning him; and he proposed Matilda for their choice. Before the council broke up, a deputation arrived from the Londoners, who earnestly solicited the legate and clergy to interfere, and obtain, if possible, the release of the king from his captivity. In reply, the legate was not ashamed to speak to them of the disgrace of supporting a king, who had, he said, 'dishonoured the holy church.'

In the same year, however, the haughty behaviour of the Empress Matilda irritated the people so exceedingly, that she was obliged to flee from London. The legate soon after again changed sides; and declared the curse, which he had pronounced against her opponents, to be no longer in force. Enraged at his desertion, the Empress advanced on Winches-

ter, to seize his person; but was foiled in the attempt, and Earl Robert fell into the Bishop's hands. He was soon after liberated by Stephen's queen, in exchange for her husband.

Sept.
14.

And now the legate again summoned a council; and had the front to tell them that necessity not choice, had made him support Matilda for a while.

Stephen himself was at the council; and, in his presence, a messenger from the Empress

Dec.
7.

charged the legate, by the faith he had pledged to her, to proceed no farther; declaring, at the same time, that he must be conscious his letters had first brought her to England, and his persuasion led her to keep the king confined. But nothing could shame this chosen representative of the pope. He again wickedly profaned the name of God; pronouncing his curse and that of the Church to be upon all, who should support the Countess of Anjou; for that was the highest title he now chose to give the Empress.

Not long after, Stephen besieged his rival in Oxford. The provisions of the garrison were nearly consumed, and he thought himself sure of capturing

her; but early one morning the Empress quitted the castle on foot, by a postern gate, accompanied only by three knights, who were each, like herself, arrayed in white, to elude the eye as they crossed over the snow.

Dec. 20,
1142.

For the next five years Stephen and Matilda, still at war, were unable to collect partisans enough to effect any thing decisive. Where each resided, each reigned; and but little farther.

Thus was England without any real sovereign. And the misery occasioned by the sieges and combats of the chief contending parties was little compared with what the nation suffered from the occupiers of the numerous castles, which had risen up in every part of the country. Of all the favours asked from him the king thought none so cheap to bestow,

as permission to build and fortify a castle on the applicants' estates. Hence, in addition to those previously erected, no less than 1115 strong holds were fortified, during his reign alone.

These fortresses were generally surrounded by a deep ditch, or moat; on the inner bank of this moat was the castle wall, with towers at small intervals. The moat was crossed by a draw-bridge, at the foot of a larger tower, in which was the entrance gate, made of very strong oaken folding-doors, covered over with iron. To protect the entrance still farther, there was a grating of exceedingly massive iron bars, called a portcullis; which, moving in grooves, was let down, from above, in front of the gate. As the portcullis had no hinges at the sides, it could not be pushed open; and scalding water, or even melted lead were poured down, through holes in the tower, on such as might strive to break it or force it up again. Sometimes, after passing this entrance, another fortification, resembling the first, but of smaller circuit, still defended the approach to the great central tower in which the lord of the castle resided. This tower, called the *dun-geon*, might be four or five stories high; with small gloomy windows in walls which, near the ground, were fourteen or twenty feet thick. In the damp and dark vaults at the base of this tower, captives were confined. And hence, though a *dungeon* was often the scene of much rude feasting, the name came to mean a prison of the most dismal kind. Blessed be God, that living in happier times, we now see the ruins of these abodes of lawless violence and cruelty, only as objects which serve to make a peaceful view look more beautiful. But in Stephen's days they were like the dens of so many wild beasts; from whence armed men rushed out, to pillage the poor husbandmen, or the unprotected traveller.

When the garrisons of these castles sallied be-

yond the estates of the lord who employed them, they plundered the houses of the helpless villagers, even to their beds; and drove off the sheep and cattle from their fields. And if the farmer attempted to save his property, he too was dragged off, to be shut up in the vaults of the dungeon. The way-faring man, wherever he was met with, was robbed, and hurried to prison in the same manner. And if the unhappy captives, thus lawlessly detained, refused to write to their friends for money, to purchase their ransom, they were tortured, after different horrible devices, till the pain compelled them to send and beg that the sum desired might be brought and given to their oppressors.

The law had no power to check these robbers; for the king, who should have given weight to the law, was struggling to keep his crown. Religion had no useful influence; for the priests had taught men to believe, that, with the money they had stolen, they might purchase the intercession of some departed saint, who would not fail to procure their pardon. Nay, priests and prelates, in whose keeping was the word of God, knew not, or despised that fearful threat of *the Lord of Hosts*, who saith, that *His curse, against every one that stealeth, shall enter into the house of the thief; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof**. "The bishops, the bishops themselves," says a writer of that age, "I blush to say it, not all indeed, but many—of whom public fame chiefly accuses the Bishops of Winchester, Lincoln, and Litchfield, as more intent than others on these irreligious pursuits—bound in iron, and compleatly furnished with arms, are accustomed to mount war-horses with the destroyers of their country, to share their booty, to put in bonds and torture the knights whom they take in

* Zech. v. 3, 4.

the chance of war, or whom they meet full of money. And while they themselves were the head and cause of so much wickedness and enormity, they laid the blame on their soldiers."

Such were the poor lost sinners whom the blind kings of those days chose for their blind leaders, when they made them bishops. Such were the bishops, who claimed to be judged of no man; save only of the head of the church. Alas, for them! By the Head of the Church they must be judged; even by Him who said, *It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come. It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea* *.

In 1147 Matilda withdrew to Normandy; but an attempt to break down the power of two wealthy barons, and a quarrel with the archbishop, in which Stephen had the weakness to let his brother, the Bishop of Winchester, involve him, still kept the king and the country strangers to the blessings of peace.

At length Stephen lost his eldest son, Eustace, by a sudden death; whilst Henry, the son of Matilda, had not only grown up to man's estate, and succeeded to the dominions of both his parents, but had added thereto, by marriage, still richer provinces. When therefore this young prince landed in England, and had rallied about him his mother's adherents, Stephen saw very plainly that he could not maintain the contest with any hopes of success.

In this state of affairs the Archbishop, and the Bishop of Winchester, came forward with great propriety to mediate between the two parties. Stephen consented that Henry should be acknowledged as his rightful successor; and the earls, bishops, governors of the king's cas-

A.D.
1152.

Nov. 7,
1153.

* Luke xvii. 1, 2.

tles, and inhabitants of boroughs, were sworn to abide by this treaty, and to put the kingdom into Henry's possession on Stephen's demise. In return, Henry did homage to Stephen as king of England; and promised that his surviving son, William, should be allowed to retain in peace the possessions which had belonged to his family before Stephen's accession to the throne.

Peace being thus restored, king Stephen and his adopted heir visited several places in company, to let the nation see on what friendly terms they
 Oct. 25, 1154, proposed to live. But, before a year had elapsed, Stephen died; and thus terminated his disastrous reign.

The prophet Isaiah was directed to say unto his nation, *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger. They are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by strangers* *. After the like manner the English nation had sinned. They had indeed *gone backward*; forsaking the word of the Lord, and *provoking the Holy One of Israel unto anger*, by becoming worshippers of images; which were now set up in every church. And yet they would *revolt more and more*; though they had received the same chastisement as the children of Judah. Their *country was become desolate*; so desolate, that writers, who witnessed what they described, tell us, that in many parts of England, a man might ride a whole day, without seeing one human being on his road. Their *cities*

* Isa. i. 4, 5, 7.

too were *burnt with fire*. Winchester, Worcester, Nottingham, Oxford, Wareham, had all been laid in ashes. But even amidst His chastisements, the Lord remembered mercy; and though the people were *slow of heart* to learn spiritual truths from their afflictions, He thereby opened their eyes to the knowledge of many things advantageous to the worldly interests of the nation. Thus the commonalty were taught, by their late calamities, to assist succeeding kings with zeal and fidelity in the difficult task of reducing the nobility to order, and of putting an end to all private warfare. And the terror of being shut out, by excommunication, from all hopes of the mercy of God, was necessarily very much diminished by the indecent use which the legate made of his authority. For few could be so weak as to think, that The Holy and the Just One would indeed hold that conduct accursed, which, but a few days before, was acceptable in his sight; merely because an interested and ambitious priest had, in the meantime, thought it advantageous to change his party.

CHAPTER V.

Reign of Henry II., the first King of the Plantagenet Family.

OUR LORD declared it to be so difficult for the great to enter into the kingdom of heaven, that men might judge it impossible, if all things were not possible with God. The difficulty may be supposed to have become less, when they, who desired to be admitted into that kingdom, were no longer obliged to look forward to the loss of all their property, as the almost certain consequence of acknowledging Christ for their King. Yet riches must ever give ad-

ditional strength to those temptations which allure men to pride, to lust, and to worldly-mindedness. Hence, when the disadvantages, under which any one enters upon life, are estimated, as in sound reason they ought to be, by the probable danger of his losing eternal happiness, it will be perceived that Henry II. was exceedingly to be pitied on his accession to the English throne.

He seems, indeed, to have been happily exempted from that inclination to delight in cruelty, or in ferocious acts of revenge, which degraded the three first Norman kings; and he had, at least, as much taste for intellectual gratification as Henry Beauclerc. Even in his ambitious projects there appeared more of a wish to find pleasure in skilfully adjusting his arrangements, than in the sanguinary delight of war. But he was a *lover of pleasure, more than a lover of God*; and now, at the age of twenty-one, when freedom from the restraint of a father's authority proves an overpowering trial for most youths with his disposition, Henry found himself king of England, and lord of a third part of France; possessed of means which rendered it easy for him to gratify every passion; surrounded by flatterers greedy to serve even his most sinful desires; and unacquainted with any religion, but one which tempted him to think, that his influence and wealth could procure pardon for all his departures from the law of holiness.

On the other hand, so little is there in ample possessions to satisfy the mind, and make it contented and happy, that the young king had already been driven, by his desire for more, to do two things, the like to which many an honest peasant would not have done, to get rid of his poverty. For the purpose of obtaining her rich inheritance, Henry had married Eleanor, heiress of Aquitaine; the cast off wife of Louis, king of France; a woman considerably older than himself; and who, besides her

tainted honour, was known to have a very violent temper. But England, Normandy, and Aquitaine were not enough. He thought all too little, unless he could keep Anjou also. For this object, he robbed his younger brother; set aside the will of their father; and broke his own solemn oath.

The case stood thus. The empress Matilda's husband, Geoffry Plantagenet, earl of Anjou, had desired, on his death-bed, that his body might not be buried, till his eldest son should have sworn to observe the conditions of his will; of which the chief was, that whenever Henry succeeded to the crown of England, he should give up the earldom of Anjou to his next brother. Henry took the oath. But, when he became king, he applied to the pope to release him from the obligation to observe it; on the plea, that he had not sworn voluntarily, but under compulsion; inasmuch as he could not have borne exposing his father to remain unburied. Had he been entrapped, by filial respect, into an oath to do wrong to another, his excuse might have been deemed valid; but this oath only required him to resign a portion of his abundance to a brother.

The pope to whom he applied, Nicholas Breakspear by name *, was the son of Robert Chambers; a clergyman, and afterwards a monk of St. Albans.

* It was about this time that surnames began to come into common use in England. At first, men of the same Christian name were distinguished by adding their place of residence, or description, as John of Oxford, Hugh Le Gros, i. e. the Large. But henceforward, instead of changing these surnames in each generation, they began to descend from father to son. Thus families are still named from the estates, or residence of the ancestor with whom the surname began; others from the occupation, as Smith, Taylor, Chapman; some from his complexion, or peculiarity of form, as Brown, Longman; some from the Christian name of his parents, as Johnson, Jackson, Watson; some from his quality, or character, as Franklin, Vavasor, Gay, Meek. Other surnames appear to have been originally given, or assumed, in jest. Some still mark a Saxon, and others a Norman origin.

It is not a little remarkable, that the only Englishman ever elected pope should have been the offspring of one of those connections which the papal power had been labouring from the time of Dunstan to that of Anselm, to cast into disgrace.

A.D. Breakspear, on becoming Pope, took the
1155. name of Adrian IV.; and he now shewed his complaisance for the sovereign of his native country, by giving his sanction to Henry's neglect of his oath.

The younger brother, whom the King thus deprived of his rights, was soon after invited by the citizens of Nantes, in Brittany, to become their earl. The next year he died; and Henry compelled the Nantese to receive himself, as his brother's heir. Having thus got a footing in Brittany, he succeeded, partly by persuasion, and partly by force, in making the, hitherto, independant Earl of Bretagne*, acknowledge him as his lord, and settle his province on a daughter, who was at the same time betrothed to an infant son of Henry. Thus was the whole of the French coast, from opposite Hampshire to the frontiers of Navarre, subject to the King of England. Normandy and Maine he had inherited from Matilda; Anjou and Touraine from his father. His wife had brought him, as her portion, the seven provinces of Poitou, Saintonge, Auvergne, Perigord, the Limousin, Angouleme, and Guienne. Louis VII. was, at this time, the acknowledged sovereign of all France; but there were other princes as independent in their respective provinces, though not so powerful, as Henry; so that the portion of which King Louis was really master, was less than that possessed by one of his subjects, who had the kingdom of England besides. Had the government of these extensive territories continued to be united with the English crown, there can be little doubt, but that the descendants

* See p. 76.

of Louis would soon have been driven from their throne, to make way for the Plantagenets. In this event England would, too probably, have become a neglected province; ruled by the deputies of Henry's successors. For the finer climate, and more abundant resources of France, would naturally have led the sovereigns to reside altogether on the continent. Indeed, Henry II. himself may be considered, more properly, as a great French lord, holding the kingdom of England, with his other estates, than as a king of England having vast estates in France. For, though maternally descended by Matilda from Saxon kings, his father Geoffry was a French earl, or count; he himself lived the greater part of his life in France; and in France he died. His language was French; but so indeed, at this time, was the language of the nobility, gentry, great clergy, and lawyers of England. For the Normans brought over the French tongue; and as they were become the chief proprietors of the soil, and held all great offices both in the church and law, all affairs of state, and all business in the courts of law, were conducted in their language instead of Saxon; unless when Latin was employed. It was the constant intercourse now kept up between the clergy and the court of Rome, and the continuance of Latin in the church service, which maintained the familiar use of Latin amongst ecclesiastics. From the gradual mixture of Saxon, Norman, and Latin, our present English gradually arose. But so little of an Englishman was Henry II. that, even towards the close of his reign, he was obliged to ask an attendant what was meant, when a countryman called out *Good old king*, as he passed.

To himself, Henry's extensive continental possessions proved a source of much care and fatigue, and, finally, of very great unhappiness; but his English subjects were, upon the whole, considerably benefited by his being so much more powerful

than he would have been, if only king of England. The nobles, who would have resisted the authority of a weaker monarch, were obliged to submit to the laws, which they found Henry determined to enforce. At his order, six fortresses, belonging to the turbulent Bishop of Winchester, were dismantled at once; and he compelled several other powerful barons to suffer their castles and dungeons to be demolished. The numerous foreign soldiers, whom Stephen's invitations had brought over, and who had hitherto subsisted on the plunder of the English, were also forced to go on ship-board at the king's command; and returned, most reluctantly, to their respective countries. The king of Scotland too, who had taken advantage of the late civil wars to get into his hands, and keep possession of Northumberland, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, was content to relinquish them at Henry's desire, in exchange for the earldom of Huntingdon; to which he had a claim by marriage. The distance of this small county from Scotland made him henceforward desirous of conducting himself to the satisfaction of the English king, who could deprive him of it at any moment.

Thus was England again at peace within itself; and the opposite coasts were more accessible to its traders than ever. For, besides the continental territories subject to Henry, even Flanders was, for a time, placed under his care and control; whilst its earl was absent on a crusade.

During the first eight years of this king's reign, no person had so much influence with him as Thomas Becket, whose history deserves particular notice. His father, Gilbert Becket, was a Londoner, of Saxon descent, who went on a crusade to Jerusalem, and was taken prisoner by a Mahometan chieftain. The daughter of this Mahometan fell in love with the English captive, and by her assistance made his escape. She deserted her father's house

soon after, to roam in quest of her lover ; and finding a vessel on the coast ready to depart for England, she determined to embark in it, though acquainted with but two words in the English language ; *London* and *Gilbert*. To London she was brought in safety ; and began wandering from street to street, exclaiming Gilbert, Gilbert. Her Asiatic dress, and singular manner, gathered a crowd around her. The streets of London were, then, not many ; and she was soon noticed and heard by a servant of Becket's family. The man knew enough of his master's adventures to guess who she might be, and he conducted her to her beloved Crusader. The bishop of London was consulted ; and, by his advice, Gilbert Becket married her, as soon as she had been baptized. Their son Thomas inherited the strong passions of his mother. He was sent to Paris for his education ; studied law in Italy ; and afterwards visited Rome, in the service of the Archbishop of Canterbury. On his return to England, this prelate gave him the Archdeaconry of Canterbury ; and recommended him to the king's favourable notice. His intelligence, his frank air, and his graceful manners, were acceptable to Henry, who in a very short time made him Chancellor.

This high office was not then, as now, chiefly a judicial one. The chancellor was, in those days, what we should call prime minister. The appointment of Thomas Becket to so important a post, was very popular with the genuine English, as their race had, hitherto, been completely excluded from power by the jealous fears of the Normans. As for Becket himself, his elevation seemed to deprive the unhappy man of all recollection that there is a world to come, and that when he took holy orders, he had solemnly devoted himself to the special service of God. He lived as if life, and health, and prosperity, had been given him for no other purpose

than that he might take his fill of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.

With the king he hunted and jested in peace, and served him as a captain in war. And the king loaded him with preferment; giving him, as a clergyman, the prebend of Hastings; and, as a brave soldier, the command of the tower of London, and of the castles of Berkhamstead and Eye, on whose governor 140 knights were bound to attend.

With the nobles he was foremost in the splendour and luxury of his showy hospitality, in the number of his guests, and in the crowd of dependants who followed his bidding. He had a gift of dogs, or hawks, of gold, or silver, or apparel, ready for every one whom he chose to honour. The floor of his hall was covered with clean hay or straw every morning in winter, and with fresh leaves and bulrushes in summer; that, after his tables had been filled with earls, and barons, and knights, those visitors, who could find no vacant seat, might range themselves on this ancient substitute for carpeting, and there receive their messes.

It is not an enemy, but an admirer, who has recorded that, when fish were scarce, Becket gave five pounds, equal to more than seventy now, for a dish of eels.

Once he was sent ambassador to Paris, and the pomp which he displayed has been described by the same friend. When he entered any of the towns of France, 250 boys led the procession, singing English ballads. Then followed his hounds in couples, with the huntsmen and grooms. Next came a train of eight waggons, with a driver to every horse. The waggons were covered with skins, and each was protected by two guards and an English mastiff. Two of them were loaded with ale; the rest with furniture for his chapel, chamber, and kitchen. After these appeared pack-horses, carry-

ing his money, and his gold and silver plate, and apparel. On the back of every pack-horse sat a monkey, with a groom behind it on his knees. Then appeared servants, leading the spare horses of the train; and pages carrying their master's shields. Behind these the knights and clergy, his attendants; rode two and two, in a long and stately procession, closed by the most honourable of the company, amongst whom was Becket, feasting his pride with the wonder and applause of the gazing mob.

On another occasion, when he attended the king in a military expedition, his magnificence was displayed in a different way. Becket, then, took with him 700 knights, ordinarily engaged in his service; and he hired, and maintained at his own expence, 1200 more, at three shillings each a day, besides 4000 horsemen of inferior rank.

In short, he was guilty of every extravagance in expenditure that his heart could devise. It is impossible that the income arising from his preferment, or the lawful profits of his office, could have supplied him with the means of paying for all this splendour. But the estates of minors, and the property of vacant bishoprics and abbies, were subject to his control for the king's benefit; and Henry II. in his partiality for the chancellor, demanded no account of his receipts from these sources. It was, therefore, with the king's money, that Becket indulged in profusion; and appeared more liberal in gifts than the sovereign at whose cost his apparent generosity was supported.

But such prodigality would have so exhausted the royal revenues, that the king would have been unable to meet the necessary expences of the state; had not Becket devised a new source of supply. At his recommendation, Henry, when about to engage in a continental war, levied 3*l*. on every English, and two on every foreign estate, bound to supply an armed knight. For this payment he re-

leased the proprietors from their obligation; and was, notwithstanding, followed to the field by sufficient numbers of gentry, desirous to distinguish themselves in battle. The kind of taxation thus begun was called *scutage*, from the Latin name for a knight's shield. In the present instance it brought in 180,000*l.* from England alone; but it would not have been near so productive, had not Becket taken care that it should be levied on estates held by the clergy, as well as on those held by the laity.

A dispute between the Bishop of Chichester and the Abbot of Battle, gave Becket an opportunity of shewing the king that he was ready to support, with firmness, the claims of the crown to a superintending authority over the clergy, even in matters of ecclesiastical discipline.

Whilst Becket was thus absorbed in worldly cares, England was visited by some foreigners of humble appearance, whose thoughts were bent on far more noble and more important subjects. He was slighting the service of the King of kings to please an earthly master. They were zealous for the honour of that King, who *is raised far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion*. For nearly seven years he *had his reward*; his waggons of treasure, and carts filled with ale and wine, the hollow praise of feasted courtiers, and the wonder of the gaping crowd. They were mocked for a few months; had a day and night of suffering;—and then their happiness began. The heart of man cannot conceive its greatness; and the love of their Almighty Sovereign endureth unchanged for ever.

When the Romish church had assumed all those marks of error, one after another, concerning which the *Holy Spirit speaketh expressly*, that *in the latter times*, there should be such a departure from the faith*; then was also manifested the truth of

* See 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. and Rev. ix. 20.

another Scripture, which says, *The just shall live by his faith* *. For they whose faith was so firmly fixed on the word of GOD as to be unshaken by the contradictory traditions of men, found the knowledge which leadeth to life; by paying devout attention to the plain meaning of the Scriptures. There they read, how GOD had straightly commanded that men should *not make to themselves any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, to bow down to them, or worship them* †. But they who read these words could not enter a church without seeing such images set up, and numbers bowing down, and worshipping them. They also read in Scripture, that there is *one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus* ‡; but they heard their priests teaching their poor blind flocks, to put their trust in the mediation of departed saints. Again they read, that the Holy Spirit saith, *Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord; that they may rest from their labours* §. But they found the Romish clergy teaching, in direct contradiction to this, that the dead may not rest from their labours, till they have passed a certain time in a fire called purgatory; and have there been cleansed from all sin. By which tradition the priests made that word of GOD also of none effect, which saith, *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin* ||. They who searched the Scriptures further observed, that it is there said, *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad* ¶. But the Romish clergy taught, that the friends of a dead man, by purchasing their prayers, might make the judgment which should pass upon him easier than that which should be pronounced upon an-

* Hab. ii. 4.

§ Rev. xiv. 13.

† Exod. xx. 4, 5.

|| 1 John i. 7.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

¶ 2 Cor. v. 10.

other; whose life, and deeds, and state of mind had been just the same, but who happened to have no friends willing, or able, to pay for such help.

These errors are so plainly opposed to the Scriptures, that they could never have been very widely spread, if the Scriptures had not fallen into general neglect; and God, who bringeth light out of darkness, and good out of evil, was pleased to make the conquest of the Mahometans, and their false religion, instrumental towards restoring the knowledge of the truth. Their success led many to suspect that God must have some reason for peculiar displeasure against the church, seeing that He gave up such large portions of Christendom to be subdued by the enemies of His Son. The taunts which the Mahometans threw out against the Christians as idolaters, also led those who calmly weighed their language to feel that indeed they had become worshippers of idols. An Armenian, named Constantine, dwelling on the borders of the Mahometan conquests, and strongly impressed with such

About A.D. 650. sad thoughts as these, happened to receive into his house a deacon, returning from captivity among the Saracens. For this kindness he was requited by a present of the Gospels and St. Paul's Epistles, which his guest had brought out of Syria. With these Scriptures the Armenian had hitherto been unacquainted, though professing to believe in Christ, after the mistaken manner of the Manicheans. The Apostle stimulates the Hebrews to *entertain strangers*, by reminding them that *thereby some had entertained angels unawares* *. A benefit alike unexpected rewarded Constantine's hospitality. The conversation of his guest, followed by devout study of the deacon's invaluable gift, made *him wise unto salvation*. He was soon enabled to perceive the errors of his Manichean

* Heb. xiii. 2.

teachers, and, having no prejudices in favour of the Greek church, the genuine *light of the glorious gospel of Christ** burst in upon his mind. Nor did he *hide, under a bushel*, that light which he had so providentially received; but exerted himself, very successfully, in combating the superstitions which prevailed around him.

The Greek Emperor Justinian, famed for wise laws, but deluded by blind guides in questions of everlasting importance, endeavoured to quench this light in blood. But, when he had burned in a fire as many of these readers of the Scriptures as he could lay his hands upon, one Paulus, escaping from his officers, made many fresh converts from the corrupt Greek church. Henceforward they were called, for a time, Paulicians, from him; and the Empress Theodora is said to have slain 100,000 of them by fire, the sword, and the gibbet. The advance of the Saracen armies was favourable to this persecuted people; for their opposition to idolatry was *the seal of God upon their foreheads*†, disposing the Mahometans, who hated idolatry, to be gentle to the only Christians whom they found exempt from that abomination. Other Paulicians fled from the fury of the Greeks into Western Europe; calling some back to the knowledge of the Scriptures, wherever they were dispersed. Their arguments were plain, and often blest to the conversion of those who had no sinful habits, nor covetous desires, to make them hate the light. "I hear, Sir," said an aged Paulician woman to an ingenuous youth named Sergius, "that you excel in all human learning, and that you are besides a good young man. Tell me, therefore, why you neglect the reading of the holy Gospels."—"It is not lawful," he replied, "for us profane persons to read

* 2 Cor. iv. 4.

† Rev. ix. 4. See p. 295.

them; but only for priests."—"Not so;" said she; "Sin is the only uncleanness in the sight of God. He is no respecter of persons; but is willing that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. But your priests, because they corrupt the word of God, do not read all to you." She then repeated to him some texts in opposition to the prevailing errors. Sergius had heard her attentively. He took to searching the Scriptures; and became a most active missionary of reformation.

On the northern borders of Italy the Paulicians found a people, who had been preserved, by the like adherence to Scripture, from the corruptions of the Roman church. The existence of this enlightened body of Christians, and the effect of their united testimony against the popular errors, has been before alluded to *.

In Henry the Second's time, they had made many converts in the south and eastern parts of France. But it pleased God to give the truth acceptance, at this period, chiefly amongst *the poor of this world*, who thus became *rich in faith*; that they might separate themselves from those who continued to neglect His holy word, and might be made *heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him* †. In the meanwhile the Romish priests, like the Ephesian shrine-makers for Diana, began to consider, that if image-worship, and the purchasing of prayers for the dead, were spoken against, their profits would in great part cease. Hence a fierce persecution was raised in western Europe, also, against these *preachers of righteousness*. They were now called CATHARI, or *The Pure*, by way of derision. But bitter mockings were the least evil they had to undergo. In Germany and Flanders

* See p. 366.

† James ii. 5.

the deluded multitude, encouraged by their superiors, seized as many as they could of these holy men, and burnt them to death. Thus, ^{A.D. 1140.} like their divine Master, these faithful servants of Christ were treated by the people with more cruelty, than would have been shewn to a thief or a murderer. Like Him too, they have the testimony of their enemies to the innocence of their lives. Bernard, a monk who preached against them, has called them vulgar and ignorant. But truth constrained him to add, ' If you ask them of their faith, nothing can be more Christian. If you observe their conversation, nothing can be more blameless; and what they speak, they prove by deeds. You may see a man prove his faith by frequenting the church, honoring the elders, making his confession, receiving the sacrament. What more hath a Christian to show? As to life and manners, he circumvents no man, over-reaches no man, and does violence to no man. He fasts much; he eats not the bread of idleness; he works with his hands for his support.'

This preacher is called, by the Romish church, a Saint. Let us hope, that as he spoke thus charitably of those, from whom he was so unhappy as to differ, his ignorance may have been forgiven.

Amongst the cities of the plain the Cathari were persecuted almost to extermination; but, by the special mercy of God, the knowledge of the truth was preserved among the simple inhabitants of the mountains. Amidst the Alps, the Vaudois, or Waldenses, have been enabled to hold the faith in its purity even to our days; and in the provinces of France, which border on the Pyrenean mountains, both the people and their princes were brought to reject the errors of popery. The members of this church were called Albigenses. It flourished for a time; but was afterwards most fiercely persecuted.

One small flock of the Cathari, with their faithful

pastor, named Gerard, crossed over from Flanders into England, either seeking that peace, which their adversaries would not allow them to enjoy in their native country, or, which is more probable, urged by the spirit of love to offer their happy knowledge to as many as would hear them. They were soon apprehended, as men who had *come hither also to turn the world upside down*. A council of the clergy A.D. 1159. was assembled at Oxford; and before this council they were questioned respecting their religion. Gerard answered for his companions, that they believed all the articles of the Christian faith, as delivered to the church of Christ by his apostles. But when farther asked, concerning the agreement of their opinions with what was taught by the church of Rome, Gerard confessed that they gave no credit to those vain traditions, by which the Romish clergy beguiled men into a belief of purgatory, of the use of prayers for the dead, and of the mediation of departed saints.

For bearing this faithful testimony to the truth, as it is in Christ, the council declared Gerard and his associates obstinate heretics, and condemned them to be punished by the civil power.

At the instigation of his clergy, king Henry commanded that these faithful servants of the Lord should be branded with a red hot iron on the forehead, whipped through the streets of Oxford, and, having their cloaths cut short by their girdles, should be turned out into the open fields. It was the depth of winter, and all persons were forbidden, under the severest penalties, to afford them either shelter or relief. But by those who approached them they were heard, whilst life and strength remained, testifying their faith in the promises of their Saviour, and encouraging each other with such words as these;—*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or secution, or famine, or nakedness? For thy sake*

*we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us**. Thus did the whole of this blessed company, being thirty persons, male and female, *fall asleep*; and, their bodies being slain by cold and hunger, *their spirits returned unto God who gave them*†, unto God who saved them.

How sad and how thick was the darkness which covered this island, when a sagacious king, the most learned people of his realm, and the chief pastors of his church, could thus unite, like the Gadarenes of old, to expel Christ from their borders! Some benevolent men doubtless pitied the despised and perishing martyrs. But one of that *great cloud of heavenly witnesses* who *compass about* the righteous, would see greater reason for pitying the country in which the offered light of the Gospel was thus rejected, to return no more for many years. The meek sufferers themselves might fitly have said to such as compassionated them, *Weep not for us; but weep for yourselves and for your children*‡. The eye of faith would view Gerard and his companions as permitted, in special mercy, to quit *a world that was not worthy of them*; and to pass by a short, though painful, path into the glorious presence of God their Saviour, there to stand *before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; crying with a loud voice, and saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb*. Such honour have they, *who come out of great tribulation; and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*. Of them the Spirit saith, *He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them*§. What are the honours for

* Rom. viii. 35, 36, 37.

† Eccles. xii. 7.

‡ Luke xxiii. 28.

§ Rev. vii. 9, 10, 14, 15.

which the worldly wise, and the mighty of the earth, strive, and toil, and sell their lives, when tried in the balance against this *exceeding and eternal weight of glory?*

In the meanwhile, they *who look on things after the outward appearance*, admired the prosperity of Henry and Becket. For the king and his minister were, each in his own rank, *great and increased more than all that were before them* in England. Henry had hitherto been successful, with but one exception, in every ambitious enterprise. And he indulged in all the gratifications, which his power could procure. *Whatsoever his eyes desired, he kept not from them. He withheld not his heart from any joy*, whether innocent or criminal.

But having abused their prosperity, and been tempted thereby to neglect Him who gave them all they possessed, their sins were wholly unsubdued; and were suffered to become, henceforward, their tormentors. The angry passions and the lusts of the king prepared for him a bitter cup of affliction, of which he drank even to the dregs. And Becket was driven on by ambition and pride, through a galling course of unhappiness, to his destruction.

Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, had died in 1161; and the king, instead of considering who, amongst his clergy, would best serve God in that important office, thought only who would best serve himself. He had perceived the ill effects of that independence of the laws of the land at which the clergy were aiming; and having witnessed the indifference to their privileges and pretensions which Becket had displayed, whilst acting as a minister of the crown, the king hoped to find him still more useful, in supporting the royal power, if raised to the primacy. When Henry told Becket that he had determined on making him archbishop, the latter smiled; and said, pointing to the rich dress he happened to have on at the time, 'Look what a

saint you would choose for that saintly place. If you were to make me archbishop, I know your views; and we should soon be involved in a most desperate quarrel.' A warning thus given was not likely to be attended to as meant in earnest.

When the king's intentions were made known to the clergy of Canterbury, they declared that it was an indecent thing to elect a man archbishop, who was rather a soldier than a priest; and more given to hunting and hawking than to any pursuits suitable to that sacred profession, of which he had hitherto been an heedless member. The clergy doubtless thought from the past, as the king did, that if Becket was placed at the head of their church, his thankfulness to Henry for this splendid addition to all his former bounties, would be displayed at the expence of all their questionable privileges. The consequence was, that as the customs of the English Church would not allow the chapter to choose any person not recommended by the king, their dread of Becket made them desist from coming to any election; and the see remained vacant for thirteen months. In the meanwhile the Empress Matilda, and others of Henry's sincerest friends, who had formed a juster estimate than he of Becket's ambition, warned the king of the danger of entrusting him with so much power. But Henry was sincerely attached to Becket, in whom he had found a cheerful and, as he thought, a frank companion, as well as an able minister and zealous servant. He, therefore, persisted in urging his nomination, till the clergy dared oppose his will no longer; and, on the 3d of June, 1162, Becket, already Chancellor of England, became archbishop of Canterbury. But when they, whom *pride compasseth about as a chain, prosper in the world, and increase in riches* *, it is but the wrath of God *setting them up in slippery places*.

* Psalm lxxiii. 6. 12.

The pride of Becket could not but be nourished by his splendid elevation. Hitherto, as a courtier, his aim had been to gain a higher reputation for magnificence than the greatest of the nobility. The same love of distinction now took a different turn. He determined, as archbishop, to gain the reputation of foremost in sanctity. In all outward things, therefore, visible to men, he put on what was, then, thought *the form of godliness*. He entirely quitted all his former habits of life. He put on the roughest sack-cloth next his skin. Above it he displayed the dress of a monk. And when he wore his archiepiscopal robes, in solemn processions, they were so adjusted that the sackcloth might still be seen. His food was of the coarsest kind. His drink was water, in which fennel had been soaked to make it nauseous. He was probably so ill read in his Bible, as to be quite ignorant that the Apostle has spoken of such vain fancies as having but *the shew of wisdom in will-worship, and neglecting of the body* *. To complete this vain shew, the Archbishop daily washed, on bended knees, the feet of thirteen paupers; and then dismissed each with a present of four pieces of silver. He was frequently seen praying, and reading holy books. He wandered unaccompanied in the cloisters of his cathedral, appearing, to those who passed him, to be in tears. He was unwearied in his attendance at the altar; visited the sick monks; and sent rich gifts to hospitals, alms-houses, and the poor. When visited by any of the clergy, he received them with such reverence, says his friend, 'that you would have thought he worshipped the Divine presence, or angels, in their persons.'

Thus, like Absalom of old †, did the archbishop *steal the hearts* of the clergy; by whose help, and over whom, he proposed to reign as a sovereign within the precincts of his sovereign's kingdom.

* Col. ii. 23.

† See 2 Sam. xv.

And that his office of Chancellor might not give Henry the same pretext for opposing his claims to independence as Bishop Odo's earldom gave the Conqueror*, he requested the king to appoint a new chancellor; saying, that he found himself insufficient to fulfil the duties of his archbishopric, much less could he satisfy his conscience by proper attention to two offices.

The king was now, and had been for some time past, in France. These reports of the surprising change in his favourite's conduct soon reached him; but he felt it difficult to believe that Becket's resignation of the chancellorship really proceeded from religious scruples, as the customs of that age made it not uncommon for bishops to hold that important post. It seemed to the king, therefore, an ungrateful desertion of his service. In this opinion he was confirmed, by finding that Becket intended to keep his old preferment, the archdeaconry of Canterbury, with the archbishopric; two offices which a truly conscientious person would never have thought of holding together; as no man can properly undertake to be his own deputy. The fact was that Becket, having given up one abundant source of income, to become independent of the king, had no mind to part with another by the resignation of the archdeaconry; which was then a very rich piece of preferment. For he knew that he should have occasion for a very large income, to go on with his proposed course of ostentatious charity, and to supply other expenditures, wherewith he hoped to purchase popularity and power. Henry, however, reminded him of his confessed inability to fulfil the duties of two offices; and Becket was reluctantly compelled to surrender that of archdeacon.

The archbishop now began a set of bold experiments to enrich his see, and extend his authority. He demanded the town and castle of Rochester

* See p. 282.

from the king; the castle of Tunbridge from the earl of Cläre; and different estates from other noblemen, as having been, at some distant period, the property of the church of Canterbury. On the other hand, indifferent to the anciently allowed rights of others, he put forward a claim to present to all benefices on the estates of his tenants; and he excommunicated the lord of the manor of Aynesford, for resisting his nomination of a clergyman to that benefice. Thus did the archbishop, first, make a demand; then declare his own demand to be just, by his own authority; and next, punish the person whose rights he was invading, for offering resistance to that invasion. When Henry remonstrated against this, Becket haughtily replied, That it was not for kings to say who should be excommunicated, and who absolved.

This answer, though extremely disrespectful, might have been just, if *excommunication* had meant no more than what it ought to do; namely, a solemn declaration, that a hardened sinner should not be permitted to share the blessings of public worship; and that the faithful should regard him *as a heathen and a publican*; to be treated with kindness, but not associated with, unless for purposes of charity, till he should satisfy the church of his sorrow, and sincerely desire to lead a new life*. But the Romish clergy had added to this most unchristian and dreadful curses, pronounced aloud in words more fit for the ministers of Satan, than of the meek and holy Jesus. And they had farther declared, that any person transacting such business with an excommunicated person, or showing him such kindness, as men might transact with heathens, and ought to show to them, fell himself also thereby under excommunication. In order, therefore, that kings might not incur this much-dreaded penalty, nor yet be deprived of the services of those vassals who

* See Matt. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. and 2 Cor. ii.

were liable to be called into attendance about their persons, it had become an established rule, that the tenants of the crown should not be excommunicated without the sovereign's permission. Now the lord of Aynesford happened to hold property under the king as well as under the church; so that Becket's answer was not only disrespectful, but contrary to the customs of the land; and the archbishop was, in consequence, obliged to give way.

The line of conduct in which Becket was now proceeding could, scarcely, have been carried on without irritating a monarch jealous of his authority; but Becket's harsh and overbearing manner would have made his claims insulting, even to a dependent, and they entered Henry's breast armed with the odious sting of ingratitude. It is probable that Becket was the more rude to Henry, because he felt angry with his own heart, when it excited him to dispute with his benefactor. Whilst Henry would be the more impatient of Becket's behaviour, because conscious of his sin in not selecting for the care of the church a holier man, and of his folly in not choosing a meeker one.

Whilst the great churchmen were thus bearding kings to extend the privileges of their order, the inferior clergy were rendering those privileges more and more offensive, by their abuse of them. The Romanists comprehend under the name of clerks, or clergy, not only priests and deacons, but all monks; and even the lower assistants in religious ceremonies, who are very numerous in their stately church. A strict discipline was peculiarly necessary for such a large body of men, on whom their church had failed to impress the need of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to *keep us back from presumptuous sins*. But a monkish writer of that day has honestly confessed that 'The bishops, being more watchful to defend the liberties and dignity of their order, than to correct its faults, thought

they did their duty to God and the church, if they protected the guilty clergy from public punishment. Hence,' says he, 'the clergy, having this impunity, neither feared God nor man.' The consequence of this, in a rude and violent age, was that rapes and robberies were amongst the ordinary crimes of this corrupt clergy; and Henry's judges had occasion to represent to him, that no less than one hundred murders had already been committed during the first eight years of his reign by persons in holy orders.

It was the duty of the king to put a stop, if possible, to such disorder and wickedness. His anger against Becket would have made him glad of any excuse for breaking down those privileges, which the archbishop had such pride in extending; and the frightful wickedness of a priest, at Worcester, gave him the strongest grounds for interference.

A.D. 1162. This unhappy sinner having seduced a young woman, had next murdered her father to get rid of his biting reproaches. The king insisted that this man should appear before his judges; that he might suffer the same punishment as any other offender of the like atrocity. But Becket interposed, and had the man brought before his bishop; who only sentenced him to a public flogging, and to suspension for a time from his clerical duties and their emoluments. Thus was *the mystery of iniquity* indeed displayed *already at work* *. The same clergy who, but three years before, consigned that holy man Gerard to a miserable death, were now protecting a murderer from that punishment which God himself has declared to be due to but a part of his guilt, saying, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed* †. The contrast indeed must have been glaring even to the men of that age, but that the sentences against Gerard and this infamous priest, though really both

* 2 Thess. ii. 7.

† Gen. ix. 6.

decided by the same tribunal, appeared to come from courts whose proceedings might be expected to differ very widely.

Holy men had long ago taught, that the priesthood must be kept so entirely pure from all deeds of blood, that the clergy ought not even to share as judges in pronouncing any sentence, whereby offenders were condemned to lose their lives. It was observed, that the blood shed by David, in wars which the Almighty sanctioned, was yet spoken of by Him as a sufficient ground for not permitting that zealous servant to build the temple of the Lord *. How much more, it was argued, ought they to be altogether men of peace, who aspire to building up the spiritual church of Christ. Little did they think, who laboured to establish this principle, that it could ever be made a stepping-stone whereby priests committing murder might escape its due punishment. But when the principle was adopted, it followed that, in courts of justice wholly consisting of clergymen, no person could be condemned to death. As soon therefore as the Romish clergy had persuaded their sovereigns, that they had a right to decline the jurisdiction of any judges except those of their own order, they thereby became secure of not receiving sentence of death for any crime, however atrocious. But, when any offenders against the church itself were brought before its tribunals, this inability to punish with death was then found to be only pretended. For in these cases the clergy would declare a man to be a heretic; after which declaration they hypocritically affected to leave it to the civil power to decide what his punishment should be; having, previously, taught the laity to consider it as absolutely necessary, that heresy should be punished with some of the most cruel forms of death. Thus did this most artful church endeavour

* 1 Chron. xxii. 8. and xxviii. 3.

to get credit for lenity, when shewing partiality to its own guilty members; and to throw upon laymen all the odium of that severity, with which it persecuted those who pointed out its errors.

The king, however, was determined to follow up his object. In a parliament held at Westminster, he represented in strong terms the disorders committed by profligate clerks, and the mischievous lenity with which their crimes were treated by the ecclesiastical courts. These growing evils might, however, he thought, be remedied by the simple measure of a strict adherence to the ancient customs of the land; and he asked, whether the assembly were willing to abide by those customs. The lay barons said, it was their desire so to do. But Becket replied in his own name, and that of his brother prelates, that their consents could only be given, with the exception of such customs as might be contrary to the privileges of their order. The king remarked, there was venom in the exception. A warm debate ensued; and Henry at length quitted the hall, without saluting the bishops. The next day he deprived Becket of the honour of Eye, and the castle of Berkhamstead; properly military employments which the archbishop had hitherto continued to hold, notwithstanding his affectation of having entirely withdrawn himself from the vanities of this world.

It so happened, that different factions of cardinals had, at that time, each elected a Pope. So that there were two rivals, Alexander and Victor, each styling himself Pope, and calling the other a vile profligate. The kings of France and England acknowledged the claims of Alexander, but Victor was recognized by the Emperor. Each Pope therefore felt it to be very important to preserve the good-will of the monarchs who gave him their countenance; being conscious that the transfer of their
* might give his adversary the upper hand,

and would, at any rate, occasion to himself the loss of that portion of the papal revenues raised in their respective kingdoms. Hence, on Henry's application, Pope Alexander was induced to write to Becket and the other English prelates, desiring that they would comply with all the laws of England, be they what they might. Most of the bishops had already been brought over to acquiesce in the king's proposals; so Becket, finding himself unsupported by his own order, was obliged to bend. He accordingly visited the king at Woodstock, and gave him his promise that he would obey the laws fairly, and without reserve.

All difficulties appearing to be thus sur-
 Jan. mounted, a parliament was summoned to
 1164: meet at Clarendon, near Salisbury. There the assembled barons and prelates were again solemnly asked, whether they would acknowledge and ratify the ancient customs of England. To this demand all but Becket gave a ready assent; whilst he positively refused to give any answer without subjoining his former exception,—saving the privileges of my order! At this breach of his recent promise, Henry was so exceedingly enraged, as to break out into very violent language. The nobility were little less vehement in their menaces against Becket for his obstinacy; and some knights in an adjoining chamber were seen to be buckling on their armour. The prelates, alarmed lest the council should become a field of battle, were joined by Becket's personal friends in entreating him, with tears and on bended knees, to yield to the storm. The archbishop, however, had witnessed enough of war to be no novice in scenes of strife, and his haughty temper was too much excited to let him weigh the dangers which threatened, but he gave way to the terror of the clergy around him; and he promised, a second time, that he would observe the ancient customs of the land, without any reservation.

What had just passed, however, was a striking mark how much was thought of his power. For the validity of the laws was not, even then, held to depend upon their having the unanimous assent of the whole parliament to their enactment. And yet the conduct of the king and nobility evidently implied, that they regarded the consent of every other person present as useless, if they could not gain the sanction of Becket's one voice beside. In fact, they knew that the archbishop would not be withheld by any scruples of conscience, from dealing out the curses of the church against all such as should act upon any law to which they could not plead his own public assent. And it was foreseen that his excommunications would be more generally dreaded than the consequences of disobeying the laws.

The next day the customs, which the king asserted to have been observed in the times of his predecessors, were produced in writing. They were to the following purport. That the custody of vacant sees, and of such abbeys as were of royal foundations, should be in the king's hands; and that his assent should be requisite to make the elections valid. That an ecclesiastic summoned on any charge before the king's justiciary, should make his appearance accordingly, to answer the said charge, either there, or in an ecclesiastical court, as the said justiciary might determine; and that, if then ordered to take his trial in an ecclesiastical court, it should still be in the presence of some person commissioned by the justiciary to observe the proceedings; and, lastly, that if the ecclesiastic was convicted, or pleaded guilty, the church should not protect him. That the king's tenants, or officers, should not be excommunicated till reference had been made to the king. That no prelate should quit the kingdom without leave. That appeals from the bishop's courts, on matters of civil right, should be brought to the king as their last resort, instead of the

Pope. That ecclesiastics holding manors under the crown should be bound to provide the same service as a layman would render. That the bishops should not admit the sons of *villains* into holy orders, without the permission of their respective lords.

To understand the last article, it should be known that the word *villain* then meant a peasant of British or Saxon origin, who was considered as part of the chattels of the lord on whose manor he lived, and whose estates he might be compelled to cultivate. Now, from the devices of the clergy to elevate their own order, this merciful regulation had resulted; that whosoever was admitted, even into the lowest office in the church, became thereby a free man. The rule being established, such poor slaves as could read found frequent opportunities to take advantage of it. But even this door to the enjoyment of freedom, in its humblest form, was now to be closed, that the nobles might see their property would be better protected under the revived customs; henceforward called the Constitutions of Clarendon.

There needed not this disgraceful bribe, at the expence of an oppressed people, who had none to advocate their cause, to purchase the support of the nobility. They were as desirous as the king to see the clergy brought under submission to the same laws as their fellow-subjects. On the other hand, the bishops thought the king and nobles too powerful to be opposed in demands which they were thus united in making; and Becket, though he justly considered the Constitutions as requiring a greater sacrifice of their independence from the clergy than his promise, to observe old customs, had pledged him to acquiesce in, was afraid of the contempt he should bring on himself, by appearing to break his word again too abruptly. He contented himself with requesting time to examine the Constitutions, before he affixed his seal to the document to which

the nobles and the other prelates had already attached theirs; and he made no difficulty of joining the archbishop of York in an application to the pope for his sanction to what had been enacted.

No sooner, however, had Becket got back to Canterbury, where his alms made him popular with the people, and his cause with the monks, than he affected to view his past concessions to the royal authority as a grievous sin. He even imposed a punishment upon himself; but of a kind which it may reasonably be doubted whether he really contemplated as painful, namely, that he should abstain for forty days from attendance at the altar. He also sent to the pope, as if his conscience could obtain no rest till he had received absolution from the head of the church. But Alexander, anxious not to be entangled in a quarrel with the king of England, recommended moderation to Becket, instead of helping him to an excuse for revoking his assent to the late enactments.

When, however, Henry issued letters to the prelates of his foreign dominions, requiring them also to receive the Constitutions of Clarendon, as the rules by which all his subjects were to be guided in fixing the bounds between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions, the pope began to see the question in a different light. He became alarmed as he reflected on the wide extent of country throughout which, as it now appeared, the king was bent on diminishing both the power and the emoluments of the papal court. The archbishop of Rouen, therefore, was sent over by pope Alexander, to mediate between the king and Becket; and to solicit the former to withdraw, or at least to modify, the Constitutions.

The effect of this interference was very unfavourable to peace. For Becket, finding himself supported at last by the papal authority, which hitherto had thwarted his plans, took courage to re-

fuse compliance with the laws which he detested. Whilst Henry, on the other hand, attributed the pope's message to the secret intrigues of Becket; and, considering him as twice solemnly pledged to acquiesce in those measures which he thus pertinaciously opposed, the king was led to regard Becket, henceforward, as a man in whose promises of submission no reliance could prudently be placed. Having come to this conclusion, Henry was left without any hopes of effectually carrying into execution that reform of the ecclesiastical laws which he had taken such pains to bring about, so long as Becket remained archbishop of Canterbury; he, therefore, resolved to try whether it were not possible to deprive him of the archbishopric. For this purpose, Henry's first project was to obtain the consent of the pope to his removal; but he made the attempt in vain. He next cited Becket to attend a parliament, summoned to meet at Northampton. Thither the primate accordingly repaired; but found the house, which he had engaged for himself, occupied by the king's menial servants. He proceeded, however, to pay his personal respects to Henry; but his former kind master was now unhappily desirous to insult the man whose ingratitude had stung him to the quick. The archbishop was told that the king was busy with his hawks, and could not give him audience. The next morning he entered the royal apartments whilst the king was attending mass, and sat down to await his return. When Henry appeared, Becket rose; and advanced respectfully to receive the kiss which it was then customary for the sovereign to interchange with his prelates; but Henry turned away. He then asked permission to cross the seas to France. 'Very well,' said the king, 'but you must first give an account of your conduct in several instances.'

When the parliament opened, the attacks on Becket began. He was first accused of refusing

justice to John, the king's marshal. Against this charge, he defended himself sufficiently, by saying that the plaintiff, instead of swearing to his case on the gospels, had insulted the archiepiscopal court, by bringing in a book of profane songs to take his oath upon.

He was next accused of treason, for not having paid attention to the king's summons, on an appeal from the above named John. To this he replied, that he had sent four knights to state the misbehaviour of the man. His excuse was pronounced unsatisfactory; and the archbishop's goods were declared to be *at the king's mercy*. This was a form of law, understood to mean that the king might take what portion of them he chose; but, at the same time, custom had fixed this portion in the county of Kent, of which Becket was an inhabitant, at forty shillings. Instead of this, the king demanded five hundred pounds.

Another day brought with it a claim from the king for three hundred pounds, which Becket, he said, ought to have paid into the royal treasury from his receipts at Eye and Berkhamstead. The archbishop replied, This sum had been expended on the repairs of those castles; but he would pay it, for money should be no ground of quarrel between him and his sovereign. There was certainly in this answer an insinuation, that his own disposition was more liberal, in pecuniary matters, than that of the king. In Henry's present evil temper, it irritated him exceedingly. As if to remind Becket that it was his generosity and too liberal confidence which had enabled his servant to appear thus indifferent to what were then considerable sums of money, the king next demanded back five hundred pounds, lent to him when chancellor. Becket said, he understood it to have been given, not lent. But his word was not accepted against that of the king; so he gave surety for its repayment.

These claims sound little in our ears ; but money was then three times as heavy as now, and so much dearer *, that the £ 1300, to which the above sums amounted, were about equivalent to a demand of £ 35,000 at present.

On the third day the king brought forward a new demand, to such an amount as he knew it was utterly impossible for the archbishop ever to pay ; thus shewing his determination either to have a pretext for seizing all Becket's property and future income, or to reduce him to beg for mercy on any terms the king might dictate. The charge was for no less a sum than 44,000 marks, or what would be nearly a million sterling, received by Becket whilst chancellor from the rents of vacant sees and abbies, and never applied by him to the king's use. At the recital of this charge Becket turned pale. It shewed him that the king had resolved upon his ruin ; and it reminded him how largely he had shared in those measures, which he was now in the habit of declaring to be sacrilegious robberies. He replied, however, that when he became archbishop, the king's officers of the exchequer, and the Earl of Leicester, justiciary, or regent in Henry's absence, had formally discharged him from all claims for the past.

There can be no doubt but that the extravagance of Becket's manner of living, when chancellor, must have been maintained by what we should now call the embezzlement of his sovereign's revenue. The king had neglected his own duty, in trusting so wasteful a minister ; and ought to have had his accounts regularly and carefully inspected. That Becket could not render a fair and satisfactory account of the large sums which had passed through his hands, is also evident. For otherwise he could now have produced the vouchers. But the produc-

* See p. 278.

tion of this charge, on the present occasion, after having allowed his resignation of the chancellorship to pass, without any demands for arrears in his accounts, proved that the king was not actuated, in making it, by public motives, but aiming to carry his present object at any rate.

The debate concluded, for this day, with Becket's requesting leave to consult his brother prelates on so important a matter. He probably hoped to induce them to make his defence a common cause. But they disliked him, and were afraid of the king; so he only received from them the most unpalatable advice; being recommended to pay what he could, and ask leave to resign his archbishopric. The haughty and mischievous old Bishop of Winchester alone encouraged the archbishop to resistance; rejoicing to find one of his order as ready as he himself had been, to despise that Scripture which saith; *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God**.

It is not uncommon for very proud men to behave towards those who are their equals, or nearly so, with such arrogance as converts them into so many enemies; and yet to take pleasure in shewing great condescension, and still more in acting the part of gracious protectors, to those whose decided inferiority of rank puts all rivalry out of the question. Hence, though Becket had no friends amongst his brother bishops, he had many grateful followers and humble admirers amongst the monks and clergy; and their praises, with his show of sanctity and his alms, made him very popular with the commonalty. To the king's knowledge of his popularity with those classes, comprehending the most numerous part of the nation, Becket now determined to trust for security from any immediate violence, and he

* Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

conducted himself, during the remainder of his stay at Northampton, in the manner best suited to excite the feelings of the priests and populace, and lead them to some public display of their partiality for him. The charge which now pressed upon him so heavily was, for being an unjust steward to the king; and, like another *unjust steward**, he sought to make friends for himself, by letting others, who also owed duty to his lord, perceive that if he was *put out of his office*, they must expect to pay their due obedience to the king and his laws, with a strictness from which Becket would, if possible, have saved them. It was undoubtedly true, that the prosecution now begun against Becket, for the frauds he committed as chancellor, arose from his thwarting the king's attacks on the privileges of the priesthood, and he skilfully took advantage of this to assume the demeanour of a man suffering for his zealous love of the church.

When the last charge had made it evident how far the king would carry his hostility, Becket's table was deserted by all his courtly guests. On this he bade his servants, *go out into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind*. But, though resolved in mind to meet every event boldly, his body suffered from the agitation and anxiety. He fell ill, and was obliged to desire a respite from attendance on parliament for a couple of days. The depressing effects of bodily ailment humbled him for a moment, and he talked of going barefoot to wait upon the king, throwing himself at his feet, and conjuring him by their former friendship to a reconciliation. How happy for the archbishop, had he been led to turn with true humility to that greater King, whom his pride had more justly offended; but whose chosen ministers invite the penitent into his courts

* See Luke xvi.

with words which breathe such tenderness as these — *as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God* * ! But his body was quickly suffered to recover strength, and with it his passions resumed their force. He was again buoyed up by pride, and confidence in his own policy. On the morning of the day when he was to appear before the great council of the nation, he was visited by some bishops, and rebuked them severely, for sanctioning, by their presence, the barons who sat in judgment upon him ; and he forbade them, at their peril, to take any farther part in similar proceedings. Thus openly did he now express his contempt for that article of the constitutions of Clarendon, which declared the lay courts competent to decide what charges were within their own cognizance ; an article which he and these bishops had alike sworn to observe. He next began to make preparations, intended to persuade the beholders that he expected to suffer death, or personal violence at least, from the enemies of religion. He selected, for the occasion, the mass of the martyr Stephen, as it is called ; and made his chaplains celebrate it in his presence. This service begins with the words, *Princes did sit, and spake against me* †. Farther on occur these words, *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed* ‡. This verse the archbishop made the singers chaunt twice over ; that the application of it to the present state of his own affairs might not escape the notice of any. He then put on his archiepiscopal robes, and taking the silver cross, usually borne before him, into his own hands, he proceeded to the court. This cross, or the bearer of it, any man would have more feared to dishonour by a rude touch, in that ignorant age, than to break

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

† Ps. cxix. 23.

‡ Ps. ii. 2.

the most positive commands of Him who died on the cross. As the archbishop entered the hall, the king perceived him thus prepared to work upon the superstition of the bystanders, and to raise the prejudices of all Europe against any man, who should venture to arrest a prelate with the cross in his hands: Some of the bishops present went up to Becket, and requested him to give the usual officer his cross, and not insult the king by holding it up himself, as a public sign that he expected no justice from Henry, but needed a safeguard to screen him from violence.

In the meanwhile the king withdrew in great anger to another apartment, where he called the principal persons around him, to consider what should be done. The archbishop of York, fearing to see bloodshed, withdrew, and bade his chaplains follow him. The bishop of Exeter in vain besought Becket, on his knees, to provoke the king no farther. To him Becket, either ignorantly, or hypocritically, replied, 'Thou canst not understand the things that are of God.'

Henry now sent to demand of the primate, whether he would abide by the judgment of the council upon the question of his alleged debt to the crown. This Becket peremptorily refused; and the king, irritated and perplexed, incautiously assented to the advice of one of the bishops with him, at whose suggestion they went in a body to the archbishop and said, 'You were our primate; but you have forsworn yourself in opposing the royal customs. We are not bound to obey a perjured archbishop; and therefore we appeal to the pope, and summon you to answer for your conduct before him.' 'I hear what you say,' was Becket's only reply. He could not have heard any thing more suited to his wishes. In suffering this appeal, Henry, to get rid of a present difficulty, had given up as important an article of the constitutions as the archbishop had violated.

The Earl of Leicester next came forward from the king's apartment, at the head of the barons, and bade Becket hear his sentence. 'My sentence, son and earl!' said the archbishop, 'Nay, hear me first. You know I faithfully obeyed the king; and took my present office to please him. I was then declared free from all these claims. Remember that, inasmuch as the soul is of more worth than the body, by so much more are you bound to obey God and me, rather than an earthly king. You are my children; and neither law nor reason allow children to judge and condemn their fathers. Wherefore I disclaim both the king's judgment and yours; being only to be judged, under God, by our Lord the pope.'

Thus artfully did he mix up truth and falsehood. It is most true that God is to be obeyed before all things. But when Becket added, 'and me,' also, 'rather than an earthly king,' he was himself disobedient to the word of God; which, teaching a bishop how to advise his flock, says, *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates**. And again, if they who addressed him had the respectful custom of calling him father, this should have taught him, that as a father is the most faithful and gentle of instructors, such should he be. But it was a strange return to respectful language to say, You have thereby forfeited your right to judge of my conduct.

After this speech Becket moved to quit the hall, amidst the angry murmurs of the nobles. Some one called him traitor, as he passed. On this Becket stopped; and said, 'Were it not that my order forbids me, that coward should repent of his insolence.'

Whosoever, said our Lord, doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple†. In outward show Becket was, at this very moment, in

* Tit. iii. 1.

† Luke xiv. 27.

the act of bearing the cross; but as for the meekness under insults of which that action ought to have served as an instructive symbol, he evidently dreaded being thought capable of it; so unable was he to understand the things of God. Such language as that of his retort has often been used, on similar occasions, by persons full, like him, of worldly pride. It obviously meant, that if the fear of being despised by men, for conduct unsuited to his occupation, had not restrained him, the command of God and the example of his Saviour would not have deterred him from returning violence for reproach.

On the outside of the hall the archbishop was received by the people and the inferior clergy with shouts of approbation. They attended him in crowds to his lodgings, where he had tables spread for as many as chose to partake of his bounty. In the company thus collected he sat down to take his meal; sending three bishops to request the king's permission for his going abroad. They were told, the king's answer should be given on the morrow. The constitutions had made it illegal for any prelate to quit the kingdom without leave. But Becket suspected it would not be granted; and he thought it now his interest to get personal access, as quickly as possible, to the pope, residing, at this time, in France. That same night, therefore, he fled in disguise from Northampton towards the marshes of Lincolnshire; where he remained for three days shut up in the hut of a hermit. By this unsuspected route he travelled into Kent, under the name of Dearman; made a short stay at Canterbury, undiscovered by the king's officers, who had received orders, as soon as his flight was known, to take possession of his property; and putting to sea from Sandwich in an open boat, he reached Gravelines, a place out of Nov. 3. the precincts of Henry's continental dominions.

The king of France, Louis VII. had been already sounded by agents from Becket; and was ascer-

tained to be most favourably disposed towards him. About 20 years before, this king had been engaged in a war with the Count of Champagne, one of the great independent nobles of France; and having taken the town of Vitry, he had ordered it to be set on fire. The consequence of this cruel command was, that 1300 persons, men, women, and children, were burnt to death in the cathedral; in which they had vainly sought for refuge. The sight of the half consumed bodies of his unhappy subjects, piled together within a church, and the recollection that the pope had bid him abstain from this war at the peril of the curses of the church, made the king's remorse take a turn, which the clergy of that age were particularly disposed to encourage. He thought his fault must be atoned for by the most implicit devotion to the will of the priesthood, and by seeking to do their order honour, in every way that should fall within his power. The cause which Becket was striving to maintain was, therefore, precisely that which Louis most anxiously desired to support.

Hence, when ambassadors from Henry appeared at the French court, requesting that the king of France would not allow 'the late archbishop of Canterbury' to find harbour in his dominions, '*The late!*' interrupted Louis, 'Who then has deprived him? I am a king as well as your master; but I know very well that I have no right to deprive the least clerk in my kingdom.' Not content with uttering this rebuke he sent a messenger, in their company, to the pope, exhorting Alexander, as he regarded the honour of the church, and the welfare of France, to support Becket 'against the English tyrant.' Whilst all that Henry ventured to ask was, that his holiness would send Becket back to England, and appoint legates to judge him there.

But though thus encouraged by the French king, and combating for privileges which the pope was naturally disposed to maintain, Becket found that

he must suffer disappointments, sufficient to make him share, with his master, the misery of their disputes, during the five years which they were destined to continue. When he waited on Alexander, and offered to resign the archbishopric of Canterbury into his hands, as improperly A.D.
1163. taken possession of, he was desired to retain it; but was admonished to avoid harshness and precipitation, and to bear with the king. Alexander farther advised him to betake himself for a time, to the life of a simple monk in the strictly conducted Carthusian monastery of Pontigny, and learn those lessons which poverty alone could teach. This politic pope seems to have feared that the haughtiness of Becket, unless humbled by some mortifications, would involve him more deeply in dispute with Henry than suited the present state of the papacy.

But Becket wrote from his lowly cell at Pontigny in as presumptuous a style, as if he was all the haughtiest popes have claimed to be, by their office. He rebuked the English prelates for their submission to the laws; and bade them excite the people with language suited to raise a rebellion in his favour. 'Arise!' he wrote, 'Why do you sleep? Unsheath the sword of Peter. Avenge the blood of the servants of Christ, and the injuries of the church. Can you forget what injustices I have suffered. Contrary to all right, and all authority, Christ has been judged again, in my person, before the tribunal of a prince.' When he expressed himself in this indecent manner, he was probably irritated by a most arbitrary command, which Henry had issued, for seizing the property of all the relations of Becket; and sending them all, male and female, young and old, with their families, out of the kingdom. They amounted to four hundred persons; and were required, upon their oaths, to search out the archbishop, that he might be burdened with their maintenance.

But exasperated as Becket's disposition must

have been by so harsh a measure, his ignorance of scripture is as strongly marked by his language on this and other occasions as his intemperate anger. He might not unreasonably think his resistance the only means of saving the clergy from suffering like other criminals, whenever they deserved it; but it was very improper ignorance which permitted him to persuade himself, that the honour of the Lord was, therefore, deeply concerned in his success. Had he been really accustomed to read and meditate on the scriptures, he would have known that the apostle Paul, though ever most zealous for the honour of Christ, evidently thought that honour no ways compromised by his submitting to be judged by his sovereign, though a heathen; for he made a solemn appeal to the judgment of the Roman emperor. The chosen apostle of the Gentiles, did not even dispute the authority of a lay and heathen judge to condemn him to death; but said, *If I be an offender, or have committed any thing, worthy of death, I refuse not to die* *. But Becket drew his notions of the vital importance of ecclesiastical privileges from the study of the canon law, not of the scriptures. This study greatly encouraged his pride. Its effects upon him were not unobserved by his friends. John of Salisbury said to him, in a letter, 'My advice is that you should commit yourself to the Lord, with your whole mind. Lay aside other occupations. Who arises with compunction in his heart from reading the laws and canons? The study of the schoolmen sometimes puffs up knowledge into pride; but it seldom, or never excites devotion. I would rather hear of your ruminating on the Psalms!' The advice was greatly needed; but the archbishop paid it no regard. Puffed up with ill-founded notions of his own power over souls, he proceeded to shew by his conduct how unfit he

* Acts xxv. 11.

would have been to be trusted with such power as he claimed. On Ascension day, he made his appearance in a crowded church, attended by A.D. 1166. priests carrying torches. The bells tolled; and his cross-bearers inverted their crosses, as if the mercy purchased on the cross was to be changed into its opposite, whilst he pronounced the curses which accompanied papal excommunication, against several of Henry's ministers and advisers, and against all who had dared to touch the property of the archbishopric, or that of his clerical adherents. As he came to the close of this excommunication, the priests dashed down their torches, and extinguished them; whilst Becket uttered the wish, that the souls of those whom he delivered to perdition, might, in like manner be quenched in the smoke of hell.

In framing the execrations of this most wicked ceremony the corrupt church of Rome heaped together, and very far exceeded, the awful curses which Moses announced to the Israelites; as the consequences that must follow, if they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God*. It is merciful to warn men of the danger of offending, by setting forth all the terrors of the sentence which must fall upon guilt. It is proper, that we should acknowledge by our *Amen*, the justice of that sentence which God pronounces. But the popish form consisted of curses, not proclaimed as what must happen to sinners, but called down by the priest upon those whom he excommunicated. They were neither more nor less than solemn prayers that the wrath of the Almighty might follow the persons named, through every action of their lives; till it should chain them down in everlasting fire. If the archbishop thought himself unjustly treated by his opponents, that did but make it more evidently his

* Deut. xxviii. 16.

duty to act in a manner the very reverse of that he was now pursuing. For Christ has said, *Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you* *. Who but must wish that the eyes of the archbishop might, in mercy, have been opened to see through the mist of prejudices with which popery had surrounded him; and that he could have received with meekness and docility the lesson contained in that scripture, which tells how *Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, durst not bring even against him a railing accusation; but said, the Lord rebuke thee* † !

Becket next proceeded to read the constitutions of Clarendon; condemned the whole of them; excommunicated all who should abet, enforce, or observe them; annulled the statute whereby they were enacted; and declared the bishops set free, by his authority, from the oath they had taken to observe them. If any one person could thus set aside the laws made by the legislature of his country, and subject to the terror of dreadful punishment, all who should obey those laws, the government would really be in his hands. And Becket, as if he were really the sovereign, and Henry his subject, proceeded to name the king; and, mentioning the admonitions he had sent him, made public proclamation, that if Henry did not repent, and make satisfaction for the wrongs he had offered the church, he also should be excommunicated. A mind so full of wrath, must have been full of misery.

Henry was no less unhappy. His temper was become so soured, that, when he heard of these proceedings, he exclaimed 'That man would destroy my body and soul together.' And then, breaking out in a fit of violent passion, he threw his cap from his head; unfastened his belt, cloak and vest, and hurled them away; tore off the silk covering of his

* Luke vi. 28.

† Jude 9.

touch; and at last sat down on the ground, and began gnawing the rushes*. He had, however, some time before, taken every precaution to prevent any official notices, of excommunications or interdicts, from being carried over into England. But yet he could not hope to keep the knowledge of them from his subjects for many months; and he was well aware that his best, and most faithful, servants might be terrified by them into deserting his service. He had also numerous powerful and unruly vassals in the south of France, who were highly dissatisfied with his behaviour to their countrywoman, Queen Eleanor; and were looking out for a sufficient excuse to cast off the Norman yoke. Above all the consciousness of a grossly adulterous life, and of violent passions too often indulged, suggested thoughts which he could easily bear, whilst on such good terms with the church as to be sure of absolution; but made even him look forward with terror to remaining for years exposed to the curses of the church. Hence, though daily more irritated by Becket's opposition, he became anxious to come to terms with him; and by the French king's mediation they were brought together, in the presence of Louis.

On this occasion Henry said, addressing the king of France, 'Mark, my liege! whatever displeases the archbishop, he calls it contrary to the honour of God; and with this plea he would dispossess me of my rights. But that I may not be thought to require any thing contrary to the law, or honour of God, I here make him this offer. There have been many kings of England before me, some who had greater power than I, others who had less. There have been many archbishops of Canterbury before him; great and holy men. What the greatest and holiest of his predecessors did for the least of mine,

* See page 365.

let him do that for me; and I shall be satisfied.' Louis and all the nobles present declared, with one accord, that this concession ought to satisfy the archbishop. But he replied, 'Each of my predecessors lopt off some abuses, but not all; or I should not have been exposed to this fiery trial. I never will give up the honour of Christ, for the sake of recovering the favour of man.' Thus did he revert to his abiding delusion; that Christ is more dishonoured by the punishment of such gross offenders as bear the name of his ministers, if laymen inflict it, than by their wickedness. How differently did Christ teach his disciples to think! *Ye are, said he, the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men**. Thus did He declare, to those whom He was about to send forth as teachers of religion, that if they became so corrupt and vicious as to lose all the savour of righteousness they must expect not only to be rejected of Him, but to be given up to the contempt of men, as degraded below their fellow sinners.

It was more easy, however, for Becket's hearers to perceive that his obstinacy was unconquerable, than to confute his weak arguments. The whole party broke up disgusted with his conduct; and the king of France was ready to give up his cause. But pope Alexander had now recovered possession of Rome; since the death of his rival, Victor. There he was less dependent on Henry, and ventured to name Becket his legate, or deputy, over England; by way of giving him additional power wherewith to keep up the combat for the immunities of churchmen. Being still, however, not wholly indifferent to the bribes of the king of England, nor to the fear that he might transfer the allegiance of the English

* Matt. v. 13.

clergy to a new anti-pope, Alexander sought to soothe him by the surrender of several important letters from Becket to the papal court; and by absolving the Bishops of London and Salisbury, whom Becket had excommunicated. But the king had now another object much at heart. He earnestly desired to see the crown of England placed on the head of his son Henry. The youth was about 15 years of age, when his father proposed thus to raise him to the rank of his colleague; and the right of performing the ceremony of coronation belonged by usage to the archbishop of Canterbury; but Alexander, to gratify the king's wishes in this point also, empowered the archbishop of York July,
1170. to crown the young prince.

All these concessions to the king irritated Becket exceedingly. He had long perceived the dishonesty of the papal court; and he was now, in his turn, ready to dispute its authority. By virtue of his power as legate, he laid an interdict on England; but the ports were so watched that he could not send over the official notification of his sentence.

At length both the king and the archbishop became convinced, that, though each could harass and thwart the other, neither could carry the points he desired; whilst they continued to proceed as they had done for the last six years. They, therefore, again consented to meet, having first arranged the terms of reconciliation. Becket was to have the property of his see restored, without hearing any thing more of the demands once made upon him; whilst Henry seems to have been content with having an end put to those excommunications which tempted his subjects to rebellion, and gave strength to his foes. But there was no repentance for the past, to give either reason to change his opinion of the other. Their hatred; however, remained as bitter as ever; and they met but to display which could

best act the part of returning friendship before the by-standers. The scene took place in a spacious meadow on the borders of Touraine. Henry went through his part with skill; as far as assuming an air of frankness and cordiality. He spurred his horse forward as soon as the archbishop appeared; was first in making his salutation, with his cap in his hand; and talked with him in an easy, cheerful tone. Presently the archbishop alighted, and bowed himself at his sovereign's feet. On this the king also sprung from his saddle; embraced Becket; and, raising him from the ground, insisted on holding his stirrup whilst he remounted. But in the previous stipulations the archbishop had requested to receive the kiss of peace, as the customary pledge of forgiveness. This however the king declined granting. He evidently could not bring himself to go this length, in acting the cordially reconciled friend. To excuse his denial, he said, 'Here it would seem done out of fear for your protector, the king of France. I am not in my own dominions. Let it be deferred. In England I shall manifest my affection by giving it.'

The refusal was noticed. And when Becket waited afterwards on Louis, to thank him, and take his leave, he advised the archbishop not to trust himself in Henry's power, till he should have received his kiss.

A few months elapsed, and another interview became necessary. For Becket, now on his way towards England, learnt that he would find the estates of his see still in the hands of the king's officers. Henry's manner was now colder. The kiss was again withheld; though the meeting was in Normandy, and therefore within Henry's dominions. Some reproaches passed; and when they were about to separate, Becket, fixing his eyes on the countenance of the king, said with much solemnity, 'I

doubt I shall never meet you more.' Henry perceived his meaning; and replied, with some quickness, 'Do you think me a traitor?' The archbishop then respectfully withdrew.

The king had promised that a sum of money should be paid him at Rouen to bear his expences, and clear off a few debts. For this he waited several days; but receiving neither the money, nor any excuse, he was feign to borrow 300*l.* of the archbishop of Rouen; and proceeded on his journey, expressing many forebodings of ill. In truth, he had not only clearly seen how hollow was the king's affectation of forgiveness; but he was conscious that a blow, which he had himself determined on striking forthwith, might tempt Henry's irritable temper to make some very violent return. He had told the pope, that he must have full powers from his holiness; for that 'the more powerful and fierce his sovereign was, the stronger chain, and the harder staff' would be necessary to bind and keep him in order.' And this application had been attended to. He received letters from Alexander, empowering him to excommunicate the Archbishop of York, and the Bishops of London and Salisbury; who had all stood faithfully by the king, in the late ecclesiastical disputes.

A law, in force at this time, made it treason to carry notices of excommunication into England, without the assent of the king. But Becket wrought on the superstition of a poor ignorant nun, and persuaded her to cross the sea with them; enjoining her, as she desired the remission of her sins, to deliver these letters into the hands of the Archbishop of York in the presence of some credible witnesses, and then to take care their purport should be known.

The day after he had despatched this messenger of strife, he himself embarked. But before he could land the nun had divulged her commission; and the sheriff of Kent came down to the coast,

attended by Ranulf de Broc, and by several others of the gentry, to prevent Becket's disembarking. They declared that he was only entering England to raise a war against the king, and had excommunicated the prelates for doing their duty. The populace of Sandwich, however, were in his favor; and John of Oxford, whom the king had ordered to accompany Becket, bade the sheriff's party abstain from violence.

At Canterbury itself, the archbishop was received Dec. 3, with every mark of joy; and it was seen that 1170. the English commonalty, being generally of Saxon origin, felt a national interest in the fortunes of the first of their own race who had attained to such an elevated condition of life, since the conquest. The nobility were as decidedly hostile; and Henry the younger, whom he offered to visit, sent him an order not to quit the bounds of his diocese.

On Christmas day the archbishop preached in the cathedral of Canterbury. But his discourse was not of *glad tidings*, of *peace on earth*, nor of *good-will towards men*. He held forth in a bold, angry, and fierce manner, so say his own blind admirers, against the ministers of the king; and, proceeding to excommunicate Robert, and Ranulf de Broc, whom he regarded as personal enemies, he must have consumed at least an hour of that blessed day in uttering execrations against them. Thus did he yield to his evil passions, though confessedly aware of the dangers with which his contentious spirit had surrounded him. But this unhappy man had habituated himself to considering the fear of his curses, as his best defence. As a knight in those days would have put on his armour against a foe, so Becket clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment: wherefore he justly fell under that fearful sentence, which says, *So let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.—As he loved,*

cursing, so let it come unto him *. Whilst he was pouring out his evil words, destruction was coming upon him from the evil, though far less dreadful, words of others.

The excommunicated prelates had reached Henry's court in Normandy, and implored his protection against the archbishop, as against a man who had returned but to scatter firebrands, till he could make kings and bishops bend alike at his bidding. 'As long as he lives,' said one of them, 'neither you nor your kingdom can be at peace.'

When the king heard that all his plans, and all the sacrifices he had made for peace, were thus made useless, and counted as nothing by Becket, his vexation and rage got quite the mastery over him. The evil suggestion which he had just heard, suited his angry feelings; and he exclaimed, 'Shall this wretch who has ate my bread, and came like a beggar to my court, be allowed to insult the kingdom and his king in this manner? What a set of cowards do I maintain, if not one of them will avenge me on this mischievous priest.' Amongst others present, when these words were uttered, there were four nobles of his household, Reginald de Fitz-Urse, William Tracy, Hugh Moreville, and Richard Bryto; men ready to sell their souls to gain the favor of a king. These four, after quitting Henry's presence, took an oath that they would either make Becket recall his excommunications, or put him to death. Mounting their horses they rode directly to the coast; and were in England the day after Christmas.

The first night they slept at Saltwood, the castle of Ranulf de Broc, who placed some armed men at their disposal. The next morning they entered Becket's apartment as he was rising from table. His attendants were still at

Dec. 29,
1170.

* Psalm cix. 17, 18.

their meal. He saluted the intruders; but they sat down looking sternly on him, and without making any return to his salutation. After a short silence, Reginald said, We come from the king, to demand the absolution of the bishops. Becket replied, it was out of his power. A dispute followed. They upbraided him as a man who owed every thing to the king. He reminded two of them that they had once been his attendants. At last, the archbishop said, 'You seem to threaten. If all the swords in England were drawn against my head, you would gain nothing by that.' 'We will do more than threaten,' was their fierce reply. And withdrawing into the court, they began to buckle on their armour; as men who expected a contest with the archbishop's adherents. In the meanwhile the clergy closed the doors, and almost dragged Becket into the church; his pride making him unwilling to appear to flinch from violence. Perceiving that his party were shut out, Reginald seized a hatchet from a workman, and soon forced an entrance. His companions pushed forward, and one cried, 'where is Thomas Becket, where is the traitor?' To this no answer was given. But when another called out, where is the archbishop? 'Here,' said Becket; 'but no traitor.' He was standing near the high altar, and some person struck him with the flat of his sword, and said, 'fly, or you are a dead man.' He would not stir; but, when they attempted to drag him to death without the church, he struggled, and the murderers did their foul deed.

Thus perished this poor sinner, in that same church which, but four short days before, he had filled with the language of pride, and the sound of his curses, instead of teaching meekness and forgiveness. Yet because his haughty temper enabled him to press forward even to death, with unbending stubbornness, in the maintenance of privileges which gratified the pride, and favored the vices of

the Romish clergy, they called him a saint and a martyr; and invented a thousand fables to spread the belief that miracles were wrought by his influence. After some time, they even introduced into the church service a prayer for salvation, as if it was to be obtained by his merits; being so ignorant of the word of God that they knew not, or else despising that Scripture which saith, *There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved* * but the name of Jesus Christ. A hundred thousand pilgrims, deluded by these idle tales, and by their erroneous teaching, have been known to visit his tomb in one season. They came from all parts of Europe; idly fancying that a dead man could take pleasure in the trouble they underwent to do him reverence; and dishonoring the *one Mediator between God and man* † by seeking among created beings for a more able, or more willing *advocate with the Father* than *Jesus Christ, the righteous* ‡. And not only was Thomas Becket idolatrously worshipped in a cathedral particularly named Christ's church; but, as if that were little, its name was changed by usage to *St. Thomas's*; and in one year, when the offerings on the altar of Christ were but a few pence, those brought to Becket's more honored altar amounted to six hundred pounds.

Whilst the murderers of Becket were yet but on their way, the king, having recovered his self-command, had consulted the nobles about him; and it was resolved that the Archbishop should be arrested. Three barons were to be sent across the sea for this purpose; and some inquiry being necessarily made, as to whom the king should employ, Reginald Fitz-Urse and his companions were found to be missing. Henry immediately suspected the reason

* Acts iv. 12.

† 1 Tim. ii. 5.

‡ 1 John ii. 1.

of their concealed departure, and hastened off persons in pursuit, to command them back ; but it was too late. The news that they had already slain the Archbishop, in his cathedral, soon reached the king, and filled him with horror at the dreadful consequences of his passionate and hasty words. He found it to be too true, that *the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. It setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell**. But though the guilt becomes more visible when *sin being finished, bringeth forth death*, the flame must have been burning in his heart before, however unknown the depth of his guilt might be to him. Thus He who seeth the heart taught the apostle to declare, that *whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer* already†. Let not, therefore, those persons whose hatred meets with powerful obstacles, instead of finding, like the King, executioners too ready to bring about its natural end, think themselves less wicked than he. His grief, like all his other passions, was most violent, when he could no longer help seeing his guilt. He burst out into loud and bitter lamentations, covered his head with ashes, and, shutting himself up in his chamber, refused for three days either food or consolation. Yet it must be feared that, like all sinners, whose eyes have not been opened to the deformity of sin by meditation on the word of God, and the teaching of the Spirit, the king regretted the consequences likely to fall upon himself, more than he did the course of his evil language. He knew that all his hopes of resisting the overgrown power of churchmen must now be given up, as he would have to plead before the Pope for pardon on almost any terms. He was conscious that he must expect all Christendom to join against him, if he should refuse to make any satisfaction required by the Church for the murder of an Archbishop,

* Jas. iii. 6.

† 1 John iii. 15.

reputed by many an eminent saint; nor could he otherwise expect to clear his character from the foul imputation of having intended to employ the murderers, whom his words had undeniably instigated.

As soon, therefore, as he could bring himself to discuss the subject with his counsellors, it was agreed that the king should send a deputation of nobles and prelates immediately, to say to the pope all that could decently be urged in his behalf; and to express his willingness to perform any penance the pope might enjoin. But such was the wickedness which notoriously mixed itself up with almost every part of this corrupt religion, that the embassy thus sent to procure absolution for one sin, was instructed to commit another; being provided with ample gifts to bribe the papal court, that the penance imposed might be the lighter. When these envoys reached Rome, they were at first refused access to the pope, and when they did obtain an audience, they had no sooner pronounced the words 'Henry, king of England,' than the whole assembly cried out, 'Forbear, forbear,' and broke up in disorder. But of this court it might truly be said, *every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards**. When the king's bribes had been distributed, the pope was content to excommunicate the murderers and their abettors, without including the king; respecting whose guilt or innocence two cardinals were appointed to make inquiry.

In modern times we should expect the murderers to be seized, put upon their trial, and brought to the scaffold. But the punishment of great offenders was then the personal act of the sovereign, rather than the work of impartial laws; and Henry was ashamed to take upon himself the punishment of men, who would not have risked their lives to commit

* Isai. i. 23.

an unpopular crime but for his taunting language. Being unable to live under excommunication, they travelled to Rome; probably carrying with them all the money they could raise; and the papal court, which would have put them to death, without mercy, for disputing its erroneous doctrines, was content with requiring that they should go on a crusade; to blot out the stain of Becket's blood by shedding more, in offensive warfare against the nation and kindred of his mother.

The king, too, quitted Normandy to conduct a war, which the court of Rome had encouraged him to undertake. He could not easily be so blind as to think it would wipe away his sins; for he sailed to engage in an unprovoked attack upon the Irish, a people not charged with any heresy. But it had been arranged, that his conquests in Ireland should bring in a lasting profit to the papal treasury; so the king might expect to gain, thereby, easier terms, when the legates should make their report to the pope.

The agreement alluded to was of some standing. Early in Henry's reign he had informed pope Breakspear, commonly called Adrian IV, that he proposed to conquer Ireland; to subject its people to fixed laws; to root out vice; and to compel the Irish to pay a tax, of one penny upon each house to his holiness. The popes affected to consider themselves as the common fathers of all Christian nations; and therefore Adrian ought, in consistency, to have declared that he could take no pleasure in hearing of Henry's design to engage the English in an unprovoked warfare with their Christian brethren and neighbours in Ireland. The popes also call themselves *infallible* guides in all things appertaining to the word of GOD; and any really faithful spiritual guide would have reminded Henry, that princes are not exempt from the command, which saith, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor any thing*

that he hath. He would have farther observed, that the Scripture denounces a peculiar woe against *the evil covetousness* of him, *who cannot be satisfied; but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people* *. But, instead of speaking thus, the pope sent Henry his blessing; called his ambitious project, 'a praiseworthy and pious desire;' and had the effrontery to tell the king of this isle of England, that every island where Christ was known, was undoubtedly part of the property of the Roman see; that the above house-tax was therefore its just due; and that the king would do well to enforce it.

At that time, however, Henry's attention was diverted to other quarters; and perhaps a signal defeat, which he met with in attempting to subdue North Wales, contributed to deter him from proceeding to invade Ireland. But, when he would have left the Irish unmolested, their own quarrels led them to solicit the interference of some English nobles and adventurers, who, entering the country in arms, took possession of what they could conquer.

The island of Ireland is about 230 miles long, and half as many broad. The most southern parts are nearly in a line with London and Bristol; but, as it stands farther out in the vast Atlantic ocean than England, its climate receives more of those effects which the neighbourhood of the sea has a tendency to produce, being less cold in winter and more subject to rains. These two circumstances are favourable to its fertility, and particularly so to verdure. The numerous bays on its coasts, the mountains, the lakes, and fine rivers, are well suited to form a variety of beautiful prospects; whilst a number of very extensive bogs give a much less pleasing peculiarity to the face of the country. But the peat of which these bogs are composed, provides the natives with an abundant and easily procurable supply of good fuel.

* Hab. ii. 3.

The earliest inhabitants of Ireland were of the same stock as the Britons; and many of their descendants still speak a dialect of the Celtic tongue*. The knowledge of a Saviour would naturally reach them through Britain; and the tradition may be cor-

rect which describes Patrick, a native of the neighbourhood of Glasgow, as very useful in spreading that knowledge among the Irish.

About
A.D.
450. The conquest of England by the heathen Saxons would drive numbers of the British clergy to seek shelter in Ireland, at the same time that it broke the line of communication between the Irish and the southern churches of Europe, which were then rapidly corrupting; and it has been already noticed that the Irish clergy held, in consequence, a somewhat purer faith † than those missionaries, who were sent from Rome to convert the Saxons. But when the Northmen ravaged England, they harassed and subdued much of the coast of Ireland also; and the natives retiring to their bogs and mountains fell back into ignorance and barbarism; no Alfred being raised up there, at once to protect his country and call his countrymen to civilization. The Irish church however, continued to exist; and it remained independent of the church of Rome till the pope sent an emissary, who tempted the ambition of the Irish prelates, by proposing to convert the episcopal sees of Armagh, Cashel, Tuam, and Dublin into

A.D.
1148. archbishoprics. The state attached to the title of archbishop could not have been very splendid, when the residences of their kings were only constructed of wooden pillars with wicker-work between them. But by inducing the bishops of Ireland to become candidates for this title, the pope made a most artful advance towards securing their dependence; the papal court having managed to create a general persuasion that the appointment of

* See p. 159

† See p. 99.

an archbishop was incomplete till he had received his pall from Rome *. The number of archbishoprics was one for each of the four chief kingdoms into which Ireland was then divided. These were, Ulster, Leinster, Connaught, and Munster; but the king of Connaught exercised a kind of sovereignty over the three others; and he had lately invaded Leinster, to compel its king, Dermot, to make amends to an inferior chieftain for having carried off his wife by force. The adulterer, bent on revenge, quitted Ireland; and, following king Henry into France, applied to him for aid. The monarch of so many rich provinces regarded the king of Leinster as a mere barbarian; but gave him leave to obtain assistance from any of the English nobles if he could. To England therefore Dermot went, and made the most tempting offers in his power to Richard de Clare, surnamed Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke; whose extravagance had driven him to being greedy after gain, and whose bravery was known on the opposite coast of Ireland. The earl, caring little what might be the merits of Dermot's cause, engaged to support him; and sent off a dependent named Fitz-Stephen, with 500 men at arms and archers, to act as Dermot should suggest.

They made good their landing near Wexford; and, advancing into the country, were June 24,
engaged by a large body of natives, of whom 1169.
they slew 200. The heads of the slain being cast at Dermot's feet, the savage clapped his hands at the sight, and leapt into the air for joy; then, turning over the bloody heap, and distinguishing the head of a personal enemy, he held it up by the ears, and tore off the nose with his teeth. To such a wretch did soldiers of honour, as the Earl of Pembroke and his companions delighted to call themselves, sell their blood and their consciences *for filthy lucre*.

* See p. 311.

For the first party being successful they were followed by other adventurers under Maurice Fitzgerald, and Henry Mountmorris; and at last by the earl himself with a host of broken spendthrifts, and men of such desperate fortunes that one of their leaders bore the significant by-name of Le Poer, or 'the pauper.'

Strongbow married the daughter of Dermot; and soon shewed the intention of conquering all he could of the country, for himself and his English, or rather Norman, comrades. Waterford and Dublin speedily fell into their hands; and the king of Connaught in vain endeavoured to get together a force sufficient to drive them back across the sea.

The alarm now raised amongst the Irish was not however without some benefit to the nation. It awoke the clergy to a more lively sense of their duty. They knew that national calamities were very likely to be the consequence of the wrath of God against national sins; and, observing that the scourge which now hung over their country came from England, they called to mind the guilt incurred by their nation in buying for slaves numbers of English youths, either sold by inhuman parents, or kidnapped by slave-traders. They therefore, being assem-

A.D. 1171. bled in council at Armagh, passed a decree requiring their countrymen to set all their English slaves at liberty forthwith. In this they did well; but the ferocity of Dermot, and the treachery and murders which broke out, at this time, in the royal family of Connaught, proved that there were other national sins, for which it equally behoved them to call their countrymen to repentance, and to exhort their kings and their nobles to *cry mightily to God, and to turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands* *.

It was the news of Strongbow's success which

* Jonah iii. 8.

gave king Henry a pretext for quitting France. He arrived off Waterford with a fleet of 400 transports; advanced with his army as far inward as Cashel; and received the homage of all the chieftains of Munster and Leinster. In Dublin he held his court at Christmas in a house, the walls of which were but wattled boughs; yet he dazzled the natives by the magnificence of his retinue, and the hospitality which he displayed. The clergy too, respecting the authority of pope Adrian, consented to acknowledge Henry as lawful sovereign of Ireland; and agreed to bring their discipline to closer uniformity with that of the church of Rome.

In the meanwhile the papal legates had reached Normandy, and the king had ascertained that the terms on which he might be reconciled to the church were nearly as moderate as he could hope to obtain. He, therefore, again left Ireland for France; and was absolved with much form, after he had taken his oath, that he was innocent of Becket's murder; and had bound himself, to restore to the archbishop's friends all their possessions; to maintain 200 knights for a twelvemonth in war against the Mahometans; and to abolish as many of the constitutions of Clarendon as the pope should require.

These terms were much less severe than the king of France and his bishops urged the pope to insist upon. But Alexander was, perhaps, induced to make no farther public demands upon Henry, in consequence of obtaining from him a concession, which was to be kept secret at the time, but would afford a fair excuse for continual interference with the affairs of England henceforward. It appears not improbable that Henry gave Alexander an acknowledgment that he held his kingdom under the pope*; and a promise that he, and his successors for ever, would not regard themselves as lawful

* See p. 275.

kings, any longer than whilst the popes should be satisfied with their religious belief.

Thus did the pope make a gainful traffic, for the Romish priesthood, of his supposed power to grant absolution for sins. But GOD *will not do wickedly; neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways**. Most remarkably did He cause king Henry to find afflictions come upon him; and each sent according to the way in which he had sinned. His ambition led him to marry a woman of ill reputation, setting no value on that scripture which saith, *A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband*†. But queen Eleanor had a fierce temper, and he found, that *it is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and an angry woman*‡. His domestic happiness having thus been bartered for increase of wealth, he vainly and wickedly sought to find consolation in the flatteries and pretended affection of adultresses. This irritated his queen the more; and gave her a pretext for fomenting rebellions in those provinces which the king had so dearly bought, by becoming her husband. Thus did he advance in misery as he advanced in sin. His ingratitude to God, who had so highly exalted him, was next shown in his exalting a notoriously unfit man to the head of the church, for political ends. Those ends were defeated, instead of being advanced, and Becket repaid him with ingratitude like his own. In his contest with Becket, concerning the privileges of the clergy, he indulged his angry passions; and his angry passions at length tempted others into a crime which obliged him to give up all that his prudence had with much difficulty effected. Lastly, to indulge himself in the vain pleasure of seeing his sons surrounded with royal state, he trained them on to ambition and

* xxxiv. 11, 12.

† Prov. xii. 4.

‡ Ibid. xxi. 19.

pride, instead of nurturing them in the fear of the Lord. He gave them a kingdom and provinces to command when they were but boys, regardless of the welfare of those people over whom God had made him ruler. The ambition which he had thus intentionally kindled, tempted them to rebel against him and make war upon each other for more ample power; and the subjects whom he had placed at the mercy of spoilt children, supplied them with the means of maintaining their rebellions.

Thus Henry, the Younger, had scarcely reached the age of a man, before he made his coronation an excuse for demanding that his father should entirely resign to him that crown, which he had been too soon permitted to wear. Richard, the king's second son, to whose government the duchy of Guienne had been as improperly entrusted, made his mother's wrongs the excuse for inviting the provinces which were her dower, to take up arms against his father. Geoffrey, the third son, for whom the king had unjustly obtained the duchy of Brittany, joined his brothers in their unnatural war, almost without pretending to have an excuse. John, still younger, had been sent over as lord of Ireland; and, for the present, gave his father no other affliction, than that the king was obliged to recall him, for fear of losing, by the excessive folly of this favourite son, all that he had there conquered or gained.

The rebellious princes were encouraged and assisted by the king of France; and the Scotch took advantage of king Henry's embarrassments, to come on a robbing expedition into England.

These calamities seemed to Henry himself nothing less than the visible marks of the wrath of God against him; but his spiritual guides were not disposed to point out any other reason for that wrath than the evil influence of Becket. They knew that the late archbishop, whilst living, would never have forgiven the king's opposition to him, till his so-

vereign should have humbled himself before him; and they seemed to think that Becket maintained the same haughty disposition beyond the grave; and must be satisfied, or he would take a full revenge. Sin and ignorance produced the same fears and superstitions in Henry, as in men of much less worldly wisdom than he. Having, therefore, arrived in England, to take the field against his enemies, the king would attend to no public business till he had visited Becket's tomb as a penitent. From Southampton, where he had landed, he proceeded straightway towards Canterbury; and as soon

July 11, as the towers of the cathedral were in sight,
1174. he dismounted from his horse; laid aside his

usual garments; threw a coarse cloth over his shoulders; and walked the remaining three miles bare-foot into the city, marking the road with the blood which its sharp stones drew from his feet. Reaching the church he descended into the vaults beneath the floor; fell prostrate before the tomb of his late enemy: and stretched himself out with extended arms on the ground, whilst that bishop of London whom Becket had excommunicated, as the king's adviser, proclaimed his solemn disavowal of any intention to bring about the late archbishop's death. The monks of the convent, eighty in number, the bishops, the abbots and some other clergy, present, were then each provided with a knotted cord; and the poor ignorant king, baring his shoulders, received from each, three or five stripes. His bleeding back was then covered with sackcloth; and, kneeling on the pavement, he continued all that day, and great part of the night praying, for pardon and for help, to the wretched sinner whom he had long known as an ambitious and prodigal courtier, and then as an ungrateful and rebellious priest. The next morning, he assigned 40*l.* for ever to purchase tapers, to be burnt perpetually fore Becket's tomb; and, having made other gifts

also, departed for London. There he fell ill from the fatigue and sufferings which he had undergone ; having been made to feel the difference, though he yet understood it not, between the light burden and the easy yoke of Christ, and the heavy load and hard yoke which superstition hinds upon those who neglect the gospel to follow other teaching. The ignorance, which had led the king to submit to this slavish degradation, was not innocent. For he ought to have honoured God by reading and meditating on His holy word. Had he sincerely loved the truth, the book of truth was within his reach ; but of such as have *not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved*, it is declared, *that for this cause, God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie* *. And thus He did towards the king ; suffering the news of the taking of William king of Scots by the English forces, to reach London, so that it was to Henry a *strong delusion* ; tempting him to believe that as the capture happened on the day he completed his penance, it must have been obtained for him by the powerful intercession of Becket †.

For sixteen years the king of England continued to be made miserable by a succession of disputes and wars with his rebellious sons. To obtain the aid of the pope against them, he humbled himself so far as publicly to declare, that he held his kingdom but as a vassal of the pope. The aid he wanted was, that the pope should denounce the horrible curses of a Romish excommunication against his sons. But as the wrath of God never ought to be called down, so it needed not to be invoked against *stubborn and rebellious sons, which will not*

* 2 Thess. ii. 11.

† The king of Scotland was detained a prisoner, till he had sworn fealty to Henry as his sovereign lord ; and agreed to admit English garrisons into Edinburgh and some other castles.

obey the voice of their father *. Two of the sons of Henry died young, in the midst of their guilt; and the other two were suffered to increase in wickedness as they advanced in age. The death of Henry the Younger was confessedly brought on by vexation, at finding himself defeated in all his schemes against his father; but the fear of soon appearing before God, made him hasten messengers to intreat that his father would visit, and forgive him. The old king was willing to forgive his son, but afraid to return with the messengers; least the repentance of the prince should prove but hypocrisy; and their story, a plot for entrapping him. And now the unhappy young man, vainly imagining he might atone for his own guilt by self-inflictions, bade the attendant priests change his linen for sack-cloth; and drag him from his bed with a rope about his neck, to a heap of ashes, on which he expired.

Richard, then became heir to the throne; and impatient to possess the kingdom, drove his father to such extremities, with the help of the king of France, and of traitors in his father's council, that Henry was obliged to submit to the terms his enemies chose to dictate. Amongst other conditions he was required to put his seal to the pardon of all those subjects who had openly, or secretly, assisted his foes. He consented; and then desired to see the list. Foremost among these names he found that of his favorite son, John; whom he had hitherto taken comfort in believing to be sincerely attached to him. He read no farther; but returned the paper. The blow had broken his heart. He fell ill; cursed his wicked sons, and died.

Thus miserably expired this great monarch. His

* Deut. xxi. 18. 21.

reign, however, though unhappy for himself, was much less so for England than the preceding one. Agriculture and commerce had considerably revived. Henry has been much less of an oppressor than the Conqueror and his sons; yet many of the customs which he found and continued were exceedingly oppressive, after that uneven manner which distinguished the collection of the royal revenues in those times. That no source of emolument might pass unnoticed, king Henry appointed itinerant judges; less with a view of distributing justice round the country, than to look after penalties, and other pecuniary rights belonging to the crown; such as the wardships of minors' estates, the right of giving, or rather selling, in marriage female wards, and the daughters of any of the king's tenants. What a heavy as well as partial tax this last was, besides its cruel interference with the liberty dearest to the parties concerned, may be learned from one instance on the records of this reign; where a certain Adam Fitz Norman is noted to have paid the king 18*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* that his daughter might have leave to marry the son of William Lecley; and William Lecley was at the same time made to pay 22*l.* 8*s.* that his son might marry the daughter of Adam Fitz Norman; and this when money was so scarce that an ox, or a draught-horse, would only fetch four shillings. That these judges might not leave any part of the country unvisited, Henry II. divided the kingdom into six districts, and appointed different persons to go the circuit of each. Thus to the county courts of assize, which were of Saxon origin, was superadded a presiding lawyer selected by the king; and a measure which began in the selfish wish of collecting from the subjects every farthing to which the crown could lay a claim, was by the blessing of God on the later councils of English sovereigns made to lead to a most important improvement in the distribution of justice. For the

judges, who continue to be sent on circuit, having earned their experience in the great courts of the kingdom, learn to maintain an uniform manner of explaining the law throughout the county courts in which they preside; whilst they come into those counties as strangers, not having the temptations to partiality, which would be felt by persons living in them, and connected with one or other of the litigating parties, or perhaps sharing strongly in their feelings on local subjects of dispute.

CHAPTER VI.

Reign of Richard I.

RICHARD, who now succeeded to all his father's dominions, had earned by his boldness the surname of *Cœur-de-Lion*, or the Lion-hearted.

In those times of violence, bravery was held in higher esteem than any other quality; because nothing else could maintain peace and justice. Women, the clergy, and all such persons as have more activity of mind than bodily strength and courage, were fain to employ their smiles, their money, or their flatteries, in persuading the brave to fight their battles for them. Might being much more respected than right, the heir of an estate was early trained to defend it with his sword; whilst the younger brothers, sharing his habits, but not his inheritance, betook themselves to arms for support; either employing them to rob the defenceless, or to earn rewards by their protection. In such a state of things the gentry of the land became so many soldiers, without waiting to be summoned by their sovereign to war. Every gentleman, who could purchase a suit of steel armour, with a stout horse

to carry him, and could maintain an esquire, or armour-bearer, as the word originally imported, might obtain admission into the order of knighthood from any one who was himself a knight. He was then considered as a sort of licensed combatant, ready to engage in any quarrel. As gunpowder was not yet invented, he was a match for fifty ordinarily armed common men, when he rushed into battle, having himself and his steed almost encased in armour, strong enough to resist the blow of a club or the cut of a sword, unless it came from a very powerful and skilful arm. As the plates of metal and thick folds of leather, which composed this armour, made it too cumbersome to march in, the horse was a most necessary part of such a warrior's equipment. Hence the words chevalier and chivalry, which last nearly approaches to cavalry, were employed in speaking of knights and their usages.

As pride, rather than covetousness, is the besetting sin of the strong and active, honour was the reward they most greedily sought after. The haughty nobles of those times, who could break the laws of the land with impunity, were afraid of doing any thing which their companions, or the chroniclers and poets of their day, would have called mean and cowardly; because it would have destroyed their dearest hope, that of hearing themselves praised as true knights; and would have subjected them to receive the most galling marks of contempt from their rude and fearless associates in arms. As the persons, whose approbation bestowed the honour most coveted, were of different descriptions, the good opinion of each class was to be obtained by conduct peculiarly acceptable to it. Thus the women would allow none to be true knights, who were not courteous to the female sex, and zealous to protect their reputation. The chroniclers, who were chiefly clergy, spoke well of none who would

not shew outward respect to the priesthood and to the forms of religion, and abstain from injuring the property of the Church. The poets, called Troubadours, and flourishing chiefly in the south of France, were most ready to sing the praises of the powerful, and to exalt their bravery, when they found them generous and hospitable. Whilst the knights themselves expected from each other courage, and frankness, and fidelity to promises. On the other hand each class bestowed its praise on the qualities that were favourable to its views, without caring for offences which neither interfered with its interests nor wishes. The priests and monks thought that the neglect of the word of God, and of *peace and holiness, without which none shall see Him**, need not prevent their praising the grossest sinner †, if he paid them liberally for praying that he might be forgiven; though without parting with his sins. Thus did they *justify the wicked for a reward*‡. The troubadours found the most loaded tables in the houses of the dissolute and extravagant; and spoke of their vices as if they were virtues. The knights, instead of reprobating ambition and pride, admired them in each other. The noble women made no difficulty of praising those who would flatter, and tempt them to vanity and sin; provided the tempter was willing to risk his life, to punish the man who should dare to charge a female with criminality. The consequence was, that though women were much honoured in words, in the days of chivalry, they were far from being treated as reasonable creatures. No female of birth was thought entitled to choose whom she should take for her companion, guardian, and guide through life. It has been already noticed that heiresses, and daughters of royal tenants, were sold by the king in marriage, like slaves, to the highest bidder. And

-ii. 14

† See p. 338.

‡ Isa. v. 23.

where the king had no claim to interfere, marriage was equally a matter of traffic. A successful knight generally took advantage of the influence he had gained, to procure the wife whose property or connexions would make the greatest addition to that influence, or add most to his estates. She was not unfrequently only known to him by the reports of agents, who could speak with most certainty of the wealth she would bring, and of the price that must be paid to those who had the disposal of her hand. The suitor cared little whether he could fix his affections on his proposed wife; because, if tempted after marriage to fix them elsewhere, he knew that he should not be the less held in honour, notwithstanding his wickedness. For the rules whereby men were, and still are guided, in calling actions honourable or dishonourable, are entirely built on the examples and opinions of *heady, high-minded men, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God* *. In like manner, haughty behaviour to the poor, oppression of tenantry, cruelty to servants, refusal to pay tradesmen their just demands, have not prevented persons from being called very honourable men; because they might be brave in combat, and cheerful and liberal and courteous in the company of those who distributed this praise, notwithstanding their being guilty of these offences towards their humble inferiors and dependants.

One instance may suffice to shew with what open and cruel contempt for their brethren in humble life, the *high-minded* laid down the rules of chivalry. It has been observed that a knight encased in his armour, and charging with his spear and battle-axe on the common soldiers, in the field of battle, might almost slaughter them like sheep. If he attempted to slay another knight, accidentally found as unarmed as they, he would have been despised as a

false knight, for taking an unfair advantage; and would have forfeited that honour which was dearer than life to the proud. But if it so happened that his horse fell in making the charge, and he was flung from his saddle, then the weight and stiffness of his armour made him almost incapable of rising; and a peasant, armed but with a knife, could put him to death. To prevent this, it was made a rule of chivalry that no common man should dare to slay a knight; hence the poor peasants, whom he would have trampled under his horse's feet, were fain to respect his order when he lay on the ground, for their own officers would otherwise have used them barbarously. The officers had evidently an interest in maintaining a rule, which might one day save their own lives; and had also the hope of gaining a considerable sum from the ransom of the captive knight, whom the common men could hold down till he chose to surrender his sword to an equal.

But, whilst many things contrary to the law of God were held to be no violations of the law of honour, a knight would have been disgraced for life, who should have obtained so complete a victory over pride and passion as to be capable of obeying his Saviour to the letter*; turning his left cheek to him who had smitten the right. Our Lord asked, *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only*†? And it does seem to have been quite impossible for those who desired *honour one of another*, in the days of chivalry, to receive that scripture which says to Christians, *Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*‡.

Had the scriptural standard, of what is right and

wrong, been held in honour, King Richard would never have received the praises which fed his proud spirit, and encouraged him in a career of wild violence from his boyhood to his death. But because he was bold, and active, and profuse, and a zealous friend and patron of knights and troubadours, they spoke and sung of him as the best and greatest of princes, though they knew him to be passionate, revengeful, and cruel; a rebellious subject, and an unnatural son. As governor of Poitou and Aquitaine he had been most severe in exacting obedience from those under his authority, at the very time that he was setting the example of repeated rebellion against the authority to which he himself ought to have been subject. And the guilt of his rebellion was the more dreadful, for it was against the father who had entrusted him, too indulgently, with the power he thus abused.

It was from common report that he first heard his father was dead, heart-broken by the ingratitude of his sons. Then, indeed, Richard hastened to the church in which the body lay: he found the corpse placed on a bier, the face uncovered, and the marks of anguish still visible in the features of the countenance. Richard shuddered at the sight, and fell in tears on his knees. But he soon rose, to depart and secure the treasures which Henry had left in the adjacent castle of Chinon. Yet the new king gave one farther proof, instructive to the corrupters of princes, that his conscience disapproved of his past conduct. He turned off his own advisers, and took into his service several of the ministers who had been faithful to his father.

From the south of France Richard came into Normandy; and at Rouen he received the sword of the Duchy, the emblem of power. He then crossed over to England, and was crowned at Sept. 3,
1189.
Westminster.

During the coronation feast some Jews, pressing

forward with offerings for the new king, were thrust back as unmannerly intruders. A scuffle ensued, the mob became enraged, and giving vent to their evil passions, they proceeded from one act of violence to another, till they had burnt all the Jews' houses, and murdered every man whose yellow cap proved him to be of that unhappy nation; who were compelled by law to wear this distinguishing badge. The next day the work of destruction had not yet ceased, and three of the rioters were apprehended and hung by the orders of the king; but this punishment was avowedly inflicted on them for having set fire to and robbed the houses of Christians, and not of Jews only.

During these ages the restless habits and the warlike pride which so universally pervaded the northern nations of Europe, suffered few to follow with steadiness the quiet pursuits of commerce. The profession of the Church was followed, after a fashion, with eagerness, because it led to worldly rank as well as wealth; and the profession of the law was for a like reason not wholly neglected. But medicine was held in no repute, because it, like commerce, fixed men's attention on things quite opposite to those with which all thoughts of greatness were united. Hence the Jews, being neither permitted to possess land, nor to be competitors for warlike honours, found themselves almost without rivals as physicians, and in many branches of commerce; particularly in that of lending money. Now it is obvious, that whoever employs his money in lending it for profit, must expect to be paid, under the name of interest, what he could have gained by any other employment of his capital, without reckoning in the profits of personal toil. And if he runs a risk of not being repaid by the borrower, he may reasonably demand such farther remuneration for the risk, that, if he has many transactions of the kind, an excess of repayment from several may

compensate for the loss he sustains from the failure of a less honest or less successful debtor. Now the ease with which a great man could refuse the demands of his humble creditors, the extravagance of a military gentry, and the prohibitions which the Church had issued against the requiring of any interest *, all conspired to make the risk of a lender very great ; and the profits of trade were also great, being carried on by few. Hence twenty pounds of yearly interest for a hundred pounds lent, would not perhaps then have been such unreasonable interest, as could justly be called usury. But the greediness of the Jews made them aim at still higher profits, insisting that the person to whom they lent 100%. should pay them 50%. interest at the end of the year. The consequence of such usury was, that he who had once borrowed of them generally got deeper and deeper in their debt ; even whilst paying them all he could lay by, and more than the fair profits

* The Church had declared all lending of money at interest to be forbidden by the word of God, and at the persuasion of the clergy laws were passed making all such transactions illegal. The opinion of the Church was probably built mainly on the reproaches which the prophet Ezekiel uttered, by inspiration, against such of his countrymen as *gave forth upon usury, or took increase*, Ezek. xviii. 8. 17. and xxii. 12. In the Jews it was undoubtedly sinful to take any interest of their poor brethren, because God had expressly forbidden their doing so. But the law was given in these words—*Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury, but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury*, Deut. xxiii. 20. Had the word *usury*, here, meant excessive interest, as it does now, or had the thing meant been wrong in itself, the Jews would not thus have been permitted to take usury of the stranger. For, in the same book of the law, Moses was taught to say, *The Lord your God loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment. Love ye, therefore, the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt*, Deut. x. 18, 19. It was, then, evidently for particular reasons, and not for any thing necessarily sinful in the taking of interest, that the people of Israel were forbidden to lend on interest to those of their own nation ; and even this prohibition was probably only meant to extend to transactions with the poor.—See Lev. xxv. 35, 37. and Exod. xxii. 25.

of their loan. Thus, while the Jews gathered riches, they were likewise storing up against themselves the hatred of all with whom they had any transactions; and they tempted the powerful to get rid of their claims by violence, even to blood.

They were also hated by the Christian nations for the cruelty of their ancestors to our Lord. The corrupt religion which prevailed at this time, being so taught as to encourage the fiercest hatred against the enemies of the Church, instead of urging men to pray for *that most excellent gift of charity* or universal love. God had, in mercy, directed His prophets to warn the Jews, that, if they *despised the word of the Holy One of Israel, the anger of the Lord* would thereby be *kindled against His people*; that He would *stretch forth His hand against them and smite them, and their carcasses should be torn in the midst of the streets*; and that when this should have happened once, or more, *His anger would not yet be turned away*; but *His hand is stretched out still* *. But GOD also forewarned those who receive the Scriptures, that they who persecute His ancient people are indeed the scourge in His hand, yet is their cruelty not excused thereby. *My people have been lost sheep*, says Jeremiah †. *All that found them devoured them, and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, even the Lord the hope of their fathers*. The prophet then proceeds to declare that, though *Israel is a scattered sheep*, He who deigns to call himself the *God of Israel, will punish their oppressors* ‡. St. Paul, in like manner, taught, that a Christian may not even exult over the Jews; but, considering their past and present estate, should see in every child of Abraham an awful example of the danger of thinking we may claim the covenanted

* Isa. v. 24, 25.

† Jer. l. 6, 7.

‡ Ibid. v. 11, 12, 17, 18, 33, 34.

mercies of God, though we neglect the conditions thereof. *If, says he, some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in amongst them.—Boast not against the branches. Because of unbelief they were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed, lest He also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off*.*

But the Scriptures were now a sealed book to the people of England; they were only circulated in Latin, and very few except the clergy knew Latin. Still fewer were acquainted with more of the Bible than some of its most striking histories, which they read, or heard talked of, as they would any interesting tale.

Abhorring the Jews, therefore, as extortioners, fearing them as merciless creditors, hating them as the enemies of their faith, and being in miserable ignorance of those Scriptures which might have convinced them of the sinfulness of all these angry feelings, the English were ripe for executing any atrocities upon that wretched people; and the indifference with which the king had passed over the massacre of the Jews in London, taught his subjects that they might commit what violence they chose upon them, without fear of punishment. At Lynn, Norwich, Stamford, Bury, and Lincoln, the houses of the Jews were plundered, and their blood was poured out like water. At York the like pilage had begun, but five hundred Jews, with their wives and children, imploring the protection of the governor, were received into the castle. For some purpose or other the governor quitted it the next

* Rom. xi. 17. 22.

morning; and, when he would have returned, the Jews, mistrusting his intentions, and bewildered with terror, shut the gates against him. On this he summoned the sheriff and inhabitants to his assistance. The Jews besought them to accept a large sum as their ransom, and allow them to depart in safety; but this offer was rejected. A hermit clothed in white led on the fanatical mob to the assault, and was deservedly punished, being killed by a stone from the walls. It was evident, however, that the castle could not be long defended; and, when night came on, the Jews, in despair, listened to the persuasions of a rabbi, who bade them give up all hope, and determine to disappoint, with their own hands, the malice and the avarice of their enemies. Wild with unnatural fury, they straightway prepared to destroy all that was dearest to them. They filled the lower chambers of the governor's house with such combustibles as they could collect; and then, gathering in their families, they set the house on fire, put their wives and children to death, cast their gold and jewels into the rising flames, and were soon themselves consumed with the corpses of their slain. A few who would not, or dared not, join in the perpetration of these horrors, told the tale to their enemies from the walls, and offered to renounce Judaism for Christianity, if their lives might be spared. Having been promised this, they opened the gates, and were the next moment cut down without mercy. From the castle the murderers proceeded to the cathedral; and insisted on having the bonds given up to them. For the Jews had deposited their parchments there, under the care of the clergy; being willing to pay for such protection of their property, in the mistaken belief that these nominal Christians, who would spoil their houses, might fear to commit robbery within consecrated walls. But the mob had been tempted on by men who made use of their hatred of the Jews to exas-

perate them to all this wickedness, but were themselves mainly bent on getting rid of their debts by any crimes. Having murdered their creditors, it only remained for them to destroy all evidence of what they owed. Hence their demand of the bonds. Having got possession of them, they lighted a fire in the nave of the cathedral, and consumed the parchments and seals on the spot. For years after the judges were employed in endeavouring to make out who were debtors to the murdered Jews, and in what sums. This inquiry was not, however, carried on for the benefit of the next natural heirs, or other survivors of their desolated families; but to enrich the coffers of the King, to whom an iniquitous law transferred all the claims of any Jew deceased in his dominions.

In all this is seen the awful fulfilment of the sentence pronounced so long before against the Jewish enemies of the Messiah—*Let the stranger spoil his labour; let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children* *. Most thankful should we be, that the deep guilt of our forefathers, in thus defiling this country with blood, did not provoke God to lay the like curse on us, the children of a people who had alike slighted His warning threats.

It was not tenderness of his people's lives, but indifference to justice, which made the king neglect the punishment of these atrocities, and gather profit from his people's crimes.

Before his father's death, Richard had joined Philip, King of France, in vowing to undertake a crusade, to rescue Jerusalem, of which city the Mahometans, under the Turkish monarch Saladin, had again got possession. The valour and the greatness of Saladin were in every one's mouth, and Richard was impatient to prove himself braver in

*. Psa. cix. 11, 12.

arms than he; and, at the same time, to outshine his brother king and ally Philip, by the splendour of his equipments, and by the careless profusion of his gifts. That he might appear magnificently generous amongst the collected princes and nobles of Europe, the King of England was mean and rapacious at home. Instead of employing peculiar care so to fill the offices of state that his subjects might not suffer from misgovernment during his intended absence, he sold every appointment which it became his duty to make. The late king, unimproved by all he had suffered from intrusting the care of the Church to one whom he knew to be a stranger to holiness, had given the bishopric of Lincoln to his base-born son Geoffry, while yet a boy; and, before he died, had named him for the archbishopric of York. This nomination Richard consented, for 3000 marks, to confirm. To Hugh Pusey, Bishop of Durham, a covetous and weak man, at whose folly Richard laughed aloud, he sold the earldom of Northumberland; and, for 1000 marks more, made him joint justiciary, or regent, with William Longchamp. The last, who was a Frenchman of grossly dissolute manners, was made Bishop of Ely and Chancellor of England. Thus, at the same time that he had taken upon him a solemn vow to devote himself to the work of protecting from profanation the insensible grave in which Christ had lain, the king scrupled not to profane the Church for gold, by these indecent promotions. This was indeed to *strain out a gnat and swallow a camel*. For it was but a vain fancy, that the human body of our Saviour had reposed in that very sepulchre which the superstitious had, ages after, fixed upon as his; and vainer still to think of showing love to Him without keeping His commandments*. Whilst it is certain, that *Christ so loved the Church* as to

* See John xiv. 15, 21. 23.

give Himself for it; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, that it should be holy and without blemish *. But, though in his eagerness to collect treasure, King Richard alike overlooked the honour of God, and the welfare of the people committed to his charge, it might have been expected, if pride was not always full of inconsistencies, that he would have been too proud to barter royal rights and the estates of the crown for money. Yet he scrupled not to sell to William King of Scotland the right of superiority over that kingdom, which had been, with much formality, conceded to his father Henry. And he, at the same time, sold to William the more substantial advantage of possessing the frontier towns of Berwick and Roxburgh. To different private persons, some English, some foreigners, he sold lands and castles, hitherto belonging to the royal demesnes. 'I would sell London,' said he, 'if I could find a purchaser.' Happily some of King Richard's bargains were more beneficial to England than he foresaw. For, by taking bribes to permit the inhabitants of several towns to form themselves into corporations, he gave to plain citizens the means of gradually acquiring a very useful influence in affairs of state, and thus obliging both king and nobles to attend to the interests of the commons of this realm.

After having thus turned all he could into money, the king seems to have acted like a man confidently expecting that, with it and his sword, he should be able to carve out for himself a more valuable kingdom elsewhere; and therefore need care nothing about what became of his remaining property in the country he was going to quit, nor what reputation he left there. Hence, after making great additions to his mother Eleanor's dowry, he gave

* See Eph. v. 25. 27.

the earldoms of Cornwall, Dorset, Somerset, Gloucester, Nottingham, and Lancaster, besides the earldom of Mortagne in Normandy, to his unprincipled brother John. As his brother had shewn himself incapable of gratitude, the king could scarcely avoid being aware, that to put him thus in possession of a third of the kingdom, was to insure his attempting, on the first favourable opportunity, to make himself master of the whole.

Besides what had been willingly given him in return for the places, privileges, and property sold, Richard drained the kingdom of money by a heavy demand, of the value of one-tenth of every person's moveable property. This tax being levied for the carrying on of what was called a *holy war*, the clergy were obliged by the pope to pay at the same rate as the laity. The next act of Richard Cœur-de-Lion was as opposite to the honour which would have become a knight, as every part of his warfare was to the venerable appellation of *holy*. He pretended to have lost the great seal of England, and, causing a new one to be made, he issued proclamations in every county, warning all persons concerned, that his previous grants would be held invalid by his officers, unless they brought them again to him, and had them sealed with his new seal; for which they were obliged to pay very large fees. He soon after crossed over into Normandy, where many had the additional expence of following him for fear of losing their late purchases; and where they found him employed in fleecing the Normans after much the same manner.

It is impossible that this haughty prince should not have felt mortified, whilst employed in these degrading transactions; but he had looked to repaying his pride by the show he should make amongst the crusaders.

In the month of June, 1190, the pomps and vanities of the crusade began. The kings of France

and England met at Vezelay, about 55 leagues south of Paris; and were joined there by crowds of knights, and nobles, and prelates, whose banners and coats of arms gave a gallant appearance to an army of 100,000 men. But many a chieftain in that army, though his air was frank and generous, and his bounty to his comrades profuse, had been employed like king Richard, on a smaller scale, in oppressing and defrauding his tenantry and dependants, to collect the money expended in making this gallant display. On the southern shores of France Richard expected to be met by the English fleet; which had been ordered round, through the Straits of Gibraltar, under the command of three knights and two bishops. For whilst the Romish prelates affected horror at the thoughts of voting as judges in any cases, where it might prove a duty to give sentence for the shedding of a malefactor's blood, many of them made little scruple of taking commands in war; where the shedding of blood, by violence, was notoriously intended. Those prelates, who took a share in the command of this fleet, must have sinned against their own consciences, by violating what they believed to be, as well as what really are, the duties of Churchmen. For the laws king Richard had made for the maintenance of discipline on board their ships, demanded blood for offences seldom so 'punished. If one of the crew did but draw his knife from its sheath, or in any way struck a shipmate, so as to draw blood, the offender was to have his hand cut off.

On its way out the English fleet touched at Lisbon; and the crusaders, landing there, were useful in assisting the king of Portugal to repel an attack made upon a neighbouring town, by the Moors of Spain. But as soon as the Mahometans were driven off, the English began to conduct themselves in such a lawless manner, that the Portuguese had reason to lament having suffered them to come on

shore ; and several were slain before order could be restored. This, and other delays, made the ships so long in reaching the Mediterranean, that Richard had left France, and they found him in the isle of Sicily ; where he, too, was deeply embroiled in disputes with the natives. By the arrival of his navy, Richard was enabled to compel the king of Sicily to submit, on such terms as he chose to dictate ; and then, having given several ships to the king of France, and made sumptuous presents to the French nobles, and to all his own officers, he put to sea again. But wherever Richard came, he either found, or made an occasion of strife ; so that, before the English had reached Palestine, a year had been wasted ; and most of these vowed defenders of Christendom, had stained their swords with Christian blood.

The king of England found the crusaders from France and Germany employed in besieging Acre, anciently Accho, a strong place on the coast near Tyre *. Three hundred thousand of these poor deluded men are said to have perished under the walls of Acre, by sickness, famine, and the sword. For the Europeans who surrounded the town, on the land side, were themselves surrounded by a powerful army, under Saladin. The arrival of Richard was therefore hailed with

June 10,
1191.

shouts of joy by the crusaders. They had every reason to applaud his bravery, and were considerable gainers by the folly which tempted him to give four pieces of gold, where the king of France paid three. For a year and a half Richard remained in Palestine ; combating with the bravery of a lion, but quarrelling with, and insulting every associate, who dared to thwart his will. Among those who suffered from his arrogance, was Leopold, duke of Austria. The officers of this prince had engaged

* See Judges i. 31.

a house for his reception; and having set up his banner, as a sign that it was taken possession of for their master, they were preparing for his arrival, when in came a Norman knight, attached to Richard's household; and said, 'This house is mine; for I had engaged it, before you, for myself and my comrades.' As he talked loud and rudely, and was probably answered in the same tone, the noise of the dispute reached the king's ears; and, without giving himself time to enquire on which side the right really was, he immediately took the part of his own officer, and ordered the duke's banner to be torn down, and covered with filth. This was the bitterest insult that could be put upon the person whose arms the banner bore; and was, in fact, the same thing as publicly degrading him from the rank of a gentleman to a level with felons. Hence, when the duke of Austria arrived, he found himself not only deprived of the house his officers had prepared for him, but ridiculed and insulted aloud by every unmannerly Norman in the camp. His first step, therefore, was to wait upon the king of England, and beg that justice might be done him; unless it could be proved that he had in any way deserved this degradation. Now it so happened, that Richard had taken upon him to make war on the king of Cyprus, who was brother-in-law to this duke, for his inhospitality to the crusaders; and had actually dethroned him, and kept him at this moment in chains. If, therefore, the king of England had set any value on being esteemed a just man, and not confined his ambition to being thought a brave one, he would have been particularly anxious to receive the duke of Austria, on his arrival, in that friendly manner which is the best part of hospitality; and to convince him, that he never inflicted disgrace upon any, till a careful and impartial enquiry had convinced him that it was due to justice. But, instead of this, Richard heard the duke's complaint

with a coarse laugh, and deigned him no other reply. On finding himself thus contemptuously treated; by a king too powerful to contend with, Leopold appealed with tears to *the King of kings*, for redress; as to Him, *who plentifully rewardeth the proud doer*, and who hath said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay* *.

By such conduct to his allies, Richard made it impossible for any independent prince to act heartily with him; and by his barbarity to such Mahometans as surrendered, he soon taught the enemy that they must resist him to death. Thus, when the Turkish garrison of Acre at length agreed to give up the city, on condition that their lives should be saved; they also promised, being required so to do, that a piece of wood should be restored to the Europeans, which the Christians ignorantly believed to be part of the real cross of Christ, and had lost in an earlier period of the war. For the fulfilment of this promise 2700 men were detained by Richard as hostages; and perhaps a larger number by the king of France. But those Turks who got home sent word to the kings, that if this piece of wood had ever fallen into the hands of their nation, it could not now be found. This might very well be the case; and Philip, on hearing it, detained his hostages, to be exchanged for an equal number of Christian captives; but Richard had all his put to death, in cold blood!

English historians have foolishly boasted, that our king left among the Turks a name so dreaded, that mothers used the word Richard to frighten their obstinate children; and that if a horse started, the Saracens would say, 'Do you see king Richard?' But in that day, when *the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain* †, how will the boldness of the unhappy Richard be changed

* Rom. xii. 19.

† Is. xxvi. 21.

into terror; and how will he tremble to hear that nations have thus borne testimony of him, as one of the fiercest of those who delighted in slaughter!

Having checked the progress of Saladin, and despairing to achieve the recovery of Jerusalem, the king of England sailed from Acre; to enjoy at home the mistaken admiration which his Oct. 25,
1192. bravery had excited amongst a warlike people. But storms separated him from his fleet; which proceeded in safety, while he was tossed about in the Mediterranean. The delay gave time to make it generally known in Europe, that he was on his way from Palestine; and his haughty and violent behaviour towards those who were his equals, or nearly so, having made many sovereign princes his personal enemies, Richard had reason to fear being arrested, if he should land on the shores of France or Italy. He, therefore, proposed disembarking near Ragusa, but was driven farther northward; and then, landing, set off straightway, with the intention of crossing Germany in disguise.

At Goritz, the first place through which a stranger could not pass without permission, he sent a servant to procure leave for proceeding; and gave him a ruby set in a gold ring, as a present to Maynard the governor. Maynard was astonished at the extravagance of the offered fee, and asked who the travellers were. 'Pilgrims from Jerusalem,' was the reply, 'with Hugh the merchant, who sent you this present.' 'No,' said the governor, who was still examining the ruby, 'a merchant would not make such a present as this: his name is Richard, not Hugh. Tell him, he may come to me in peace.' The king, however, had learned that the governor was nephew to Conrad, Marquis of Monferrat; who had been assassinated in the streets of Tyre, and whose friends loudly charged Richard with having employed the murderers. The charge was probably untrue; but the king could not expect kind-

ness from one who suspected him of the murder, and was too likely to think revenge a duty. He and his attendants, therefore, mounted their horses, and fled ; but were not all able to make their escape. Maynard sent on notice to his brother Frederic, who had also a command on the same line of road, that Richard their foe was passing through the country disguised, in company with pilgrims. The brother had in his service a Norman knight, Roger de Argenton, and bad him visit the inns resorted to by pilgrims ; and try whether he could not detect the king's party, by their Norman manners and tongue. De Argenton was successful in his search ; but, considering Richard as the master to whom his loyalty was properly due, he warned him of his danger, and provided him with a fresh and fleet horse. This enabled the king to outstrip most of his companions. One knight and a page alone kept up with him, as he travelled on, for three days and nights, without entering a house, or stopping to purchase any provisions. On the fourth day they found themselves near a large town ; and, taking shelter in a cottage, the youth was sent into the city to buy food, and to make out whither their hurried flight had brought them. The city proved to be Vienna, the chief town of the duke of Austria's dominions ; who was then in the place ; having been loath to stay in Palestine, after being so ill treated there. The page raised the curiosity of the by-standers, by shewing too much gold when he made his purchases ; but to their enquiries he replied, that his master was a foreign merchant, whose arrival might be expected in a few days. Their questions, however, alarmed him ; and, hastening back, he advised the king not to remain. But Richard was now worn out with fatigue ; so that rest as well as food, was become absolutely necessary. A day or two after, the page was again sent to Vienna, and heedlessly carried his master's

gloves at his girdle. They were too richly ornamented for a merchant's wear ; so that the beholders felt convinced he had not told the truth, and reasonably suspected that there was something wrong, which had occasioned his departing from it. He was therefore seized, whipped, and otherwise tortured, till he confessed the real name of his master. Leopold was, then, straightway informed of the discovery which the magistrates had made ; and heard with surprise, that the proud monarch who had insulted him, and oppressed his kinsman, had been brought within his power. He immediately collected an armed force ; and Richard was awakened from sleep by a call to come out, and surrender himself. Resistance was evidently hopeless ; but the king declared he would only give up his sword to their chief. On this the Duke came forward ; received it respectfully ; and the king of ^{Dec. 21,} _{1192.} England became his prisoner.

When Leopold informed his sovereign, the emperor of Germany, what an important capture he had made, that monarch insisted, that none but an emperor could properly retain a king in custody ; but agreed to pay the duke 60,000 lbs. of silver, on his giving Richard up to him. By the emperor he was sent to a castle amongst the mountains of Tyrol, where he was put in chains ; and, as if that was not enough to secure him, a guard of Germans kept watch, within the same room with him, day and night.

Whilst these events were passing abroad, the insolence and rapacity of the chancellor, Longchamp, bishop of Ely, who was at once legate and head of the regency, had driven the nobility of England to take up arms against his authority ; ^{A.D.} _{1191.} and the king being so far off, they took upon them to proceed, in a national council, to depriving Longchamp of all his civil offices. Thus did Richard's desertion of his duties as a king, and the

vices of his representative, become the means of establishing a precedent, from whence gradually arose that invaluable part of our constitution, whereby the ministers of the crown are made to answer before parliament for any misconduct committed under the king's authority, even though their abuse of that authority should not be displeasing to him.

The notorious wickedness of the man did not prevent the pope from continuing Longchamp as his representative; and he attempted to get out of England in disguise, that, like Becket he might send over, from the continent, interdicts and excommunications to terrify his opponents. In this attempt the legate was detected, on the coast, by some fishermen's wives, who, seeing a stout woman carrying a bale of cloth, attempted to get into conversation with her; but receiving no replies, they grew angry, and snatching off her hood and thick veil, discovered, instead of a female, the dark, though newly shaven face of Longchamp. A mob soon collected round him, and he was roughly used, and dragged in the mud, before his followers came up; having vainly endeavored to make his rank known. For so entirely had the king overlooked what was due to his English subjects, that the man whom he had left at the head of the English government, was actually unable to speak the English language. Being conducted back to London, the legate was obliged to surrender all his castles to prince John, and the archbishop of Rouen; under whom the administration of affairs was proceeding tranquilly, when the return of the fleet from Palestine, without the king, was followed by rumours of his captivity.

The superstitious respect entertained for crusaders, and the pride the English had taken in hearing of Richard, as the bravest of the brave, made the nation act with one heart in taking measures to discover the place of his confinement, and to procure

his release. Indeed the clergy all over Europe, with the pope at their head, joined in raising the popular cry against the Christians who had presumed to lay hands on a crusader, returning from a war in which he had devoted himself to fatigues and dangers from a strange climate and bold enemy; for what they thought the common cause of Christendom. On the other hand, Philip, king of France, and prince John, were desirous to have him kept in prison, that they might share his dominions between them. They joined, therefore, in sending messengers, to request the emperor would make over king Richard to the custody of Philip; and they offered, in that case, to pay more than the English would give, for their sovereign's ransom. But the emperor could not venture on this step, unless he could first bring the princes and nobles of Germany to condemn Richard to be delivered up to his enemies, as a fit punishment for offences against the welfare and honour of the empire. He, therefore, carried his prisoner before them, and brought forward against him all the accusations to which they were likely to listen. But Richard being permitted to plead his own cause, was favourably heard by the warlike Germans; and the emperor, in consequence, thought fit to content himself with making the hardest bargain he could, with him and the English. Richard was, properly, made to pledge himself, that the king of Cyprus should be set at liberty; and that the captive daughter of that king should be released, and placed under the care of her uncle, the duke of Austria. Whilst the English engaged to give the emperor a sum exceeding 285,000*l.*, of which two-thirds were to be paid before their king was set at liberty. But England had been so drained, first by Richard's own exactions, and then by the wicked governors he had set over it, that willing as the people were to redeem their king, the money could not possibly be raised for

many months. Thus was the king's imprisonment as plainly lengthened by the effects of his own misconduct, as if a human judge had been heard to sentence him to a certain period of confinement in chains for his offences committed at Acre, and to add, that he should afterwards be detained so much longer, for his previous violations of his duty in England.

It was not till the 13th of March, 1194, that king Richard, landing at Sandwich, felt himself out of danger of being dragged back to a dungeon. He found that the very heavy burdens imposed upon the people to levy money for his ransom, though cheerfully borne for awhile, had given his brother John a pretext for urging them into a rebellion, which was not yet quite subdued. But, as more was still wanted to redeem the hostages left in Germany, he recommenced his reign with imposing a land tax of two shillings on every hundred acres, and with other much more improper measures for collecting the sum required. Thus he broke his seal, being unable to pretend that it was again lost; and made as great demands as before for affixing the new seal to his old grants. He also forced those who had purchased from him any of the royal demesnes, to give them up again, without receiving back the price they had paid. And he turned out several great officers of state; not to replace them by better men, but that he might sell their situations to the highest bidder.

The king's ready forgiveness of his brother John, who now came and threw himself at his feet for pardon, is the most pleasing thing history has to record of him; and he, at the same time, acted prudently, in declining to restore his lands; whereby this prince was henceforward kept in a state of dependence on his generosity. The remaining five years of Richard's reign passed in an alternation of wars and short truces between himself and the king

of France, by which neither gained any advantage of lasting importance to their kingdoms. During this period the king scarcely visited England; which was more prudently governed by his deputy, Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, than it probably would have been by Richard himself. But both the king and Archbishop were foiled in a dispute with the monks of Canterbury, respecting a monastery which the primate had begun to build at Lambeth. The monks thought that a new monastery, connected as intimately with the archbishops as their own, might gradually come in for a share of those valuable privileges which that connection had procured for them. When, therefore, they found that the archbishop could not be dissuaded from proceeding, they sent off agents to Rome; and got pope Innocent III. to issue a bull, or solemn order *, requiring him to demolish, within thirty days, all he had built at Lambeth, under penalty of being suspended from his office. 'For it is not fit,' said the pope, 'that any man should have any authority, who doth not revere and obey the *apostolic* see:'—so the papists style the see of Rome. When Hubert received this bull he was much perplexed; and tried to gain the consent of the monks to his delaying to comply with it. The king also wrote to them, threatening that he would confiscate all their property, for appealing to Rome without his permission, unless they desisted from interfering with the archbishop's wishes. But the monks, undaunted, protested against the neglect of any part of the papal order; and the king, as good as his word, sent his officers and seized all their possessions. When the pope was informed of this, he declared all the archbishop's excuses of no avail; and sent the king a bull, commanding him to restore the monks their property immediately. He added, that 'he would not endure the least con-

* See p. 276.

tempt of himself, or of God, *whose place he held on earth*; but would punish without delay, and without respect of persons, every one who presumed to disobey his commands; that the whole world might be convinced that he was determined to act like a sovereign! No pope ever exceeded Innocent III. in the arrogance of his claims. Had Richard known the Scriptures, he might have read there, that such as *speak great swelling words of vanity*, like the dreadfully presumptuous language used in this bull, are *the unjust, whom the Lord knoweth how to reserve unto the day of judgment, to be punished* *. But the king, though he feared not any man's sword, was terrified into submission at once by these big threats. The archbishop pulled down his monastery at Lambeth; and the monks of Canterbury recovered their property, and triumphed over their primate and king.

Another dispute deserves notice, as proving that the Saxon English still felt themselves to be a distinct people from the descendants of their Norman conquerors. Most of the rich merchants of London were, at this time, either natives of the king's foreign dominions, or descended from such; and they took the lead in the government of the city, yet so as to allow a share of authority to some of the principal natives. Traces of this arrangement remain in the words *mayor* and *aldermen*; the title of the chief magistrate being of French origin, but that of his inferior brethren a Saxon name. The wealthiest citizen of genuine English descent was William Fitz-Osbert, surnamed Long-beard. He, and his father before him, had refused to be shaven; because it was a Norman custom. His beard was therefore a sign, that he was attached to old Saxon usages; and it added to the effect of his hospitality, in attaching to him the Saxon populace. This man

* 2 Pet. ii. 9. 18.

charged the mayor with artfully managing that the sums, demanded of the city by the king, should lay more heavily on the little tradesmen than on the more favoured merchants; and being summoned to answer for such language, he went attended by a very large crowd, who called him, The king of the poor, and The protector of the poor. This made the magistrates afraid to condemn him. But on their complaint, archbishop Hubert issued a despotic order, that none of the commons of London should quit the city to follow their calling; and some of them having, notwithstanding, gone to a fair at Stamford, were cast into prison. Soon after this the city officers, seeing Fitz-Osbert less followed, attempted to arrest him. In the struggle he slew one of them, and then took refuge, with nine of his adherents, in Bow church. On this the archbishop was again applied to; and gave orders that he should be pulled out. But the little party defended themselves in the steeple, till fire was set to the church, and great part of it consumed. The unhappy man was then dragged through the mud, at a horse's tail, to the elms of Tyburn, and there hung. The next day the Saxon citizens tore down the gibbet; and, as he was dearer to them than many a saint, whom their priests bade them honour thus, they broke it up into thousands of small fragments, to be preserved as relics.

It was a similar feeling which made the name of Robin Hood long popular with the English; though he was neither more nor less than a highway robber of notoriety in this reign. But he was of Saxon blood; and the people wished him well, because they heard that he was a thorn in the sides of the Norman gentry dwelling; or passing, near his haunts in Sherwood forest. And as *the vile person is called liberal*, by those who look not to the word of God for the measure of right and wrong, so this poor

thief was made the hero of many an idle song, in the mouths of the dissolute.

The close of Richard's life was not connected with any thing the world calls glorious. The viscount of Limoges had found some hidden treasure on his estate; and, because he would not surrender the whole of it, the king marched in person to attack his castle. In the siege of this petty fortress, an arrow, shot by one Gourdon, a common soldier, wounded Richard in the shoulder. The castle was taken very soon after, and the king had the wickedness to command that all the garrison should be hung, except Gourdon; whom he ordered to be brought into his presence, meaning to sentence him to some more painful death. When asked what he expected to suffer, Gourdon boldly replied to the king, 'You killed my father, and two of my brothers, with your own hand; and I care not what torment I suffer, if you do but die, who have caused so much misery in the world.' The desire of revenge, thus openly avowed, was directly contrary to the commands of Him, who will alike judge the king and the soldier. But it suited Richard's ignorant notions of what ought to be admired; particularly when he saw it joined with such fearlessness of his anger. He, therefore, ordered that Gourdon should receive a present, and be set free. This order, however, was disobeyed by the commander of his hired troops; who seized the unhappy man as soon as he had quitted the king's presence, and put him to death, in a manner too shocking to describe.

In the meanwhile the wound in the king's shoulder had got much worse under the management of his unskilful surgeon; and a mortification
April 6,
1199. soon came on. Thus perished Richard Cœur de Lion, in the forty-second year of his age; having reigned nearly ten years over England, without condescending to pass in it as many

months. He had lived in unhappy times ; when *darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people*. The clergy, who ought to have known and spread the light of the Gospel, made scarcely any exertions as Christian teachers, except forbidding the celebration of tournaments. These were the great festivals of chivalry ; and were certainly very instrumental in keeping up a sanguinary disposition amongst the gentry. When a tournament was intended to be held, the king, or some other great personage, usually sent heralds into different countries to give notice of it ; and, at the appointed time, the nobility of both sexes crowded from all parts to the spot fixed upon. There they found a ring formed with strong barriers of wood, and surrounded by scaffolding and towers, erected for the purpose of enabling them to overlook the enclosure. Within this ring mock-fights took place, between such knights as were desirous of displaying their skill before the court and the ladies. Sometimes they fought with blunted lances, and in padded habits, instead of armour ; engaging either in single matches, or in troops. At other times, they had their usual armour ; but the use of their weapons was restrained by certain rules, intended to prevent the loss of lives. Yet from accidental mismanagement of their weapons, from the sudden effect of bursts of ungovernable passion, or from the violence with which a well aimed blow given by a strong arm, would unhorse a rider, these tournaments seldom ended without real bloodshed ; perhaps still more seldom without rousing such angry feelings as led the parties concerned to crimes of violence elsewhere. The Church had lately decreed, that Christian burial should not be allowed to those who were slain in tournaments. But as its orders on this subject were not followed up by the issuing of interdicts against the country whose nobility, or king, should persist in holding tournaments, the

had no other effect than that of forcing such as engaged in them to pay the clergy a fine, in order to obtain absolution. King Richard was a promoter of tournaments, but he too made a profit of them; enacting that every earl, baron, or knight, should pay a fee, which varied according to his rank from 5*l*. to 6*l*. for permission to enter the ring as a combatant.

Another very great evil resulted from thus fostering habits, utterly at variance with the express commands of *the Prince of peace*. If any one had a charge against, or a claim upon another, they called upon the judges of the land, not to settle the dispute by their knowledge of the law, and examination of witnesses; but to make arrangements for securing fair play, in a battle between the disputants. This way of deciding causes by what was called *wager of battle*, was allowed on the same vain presumption as the ordeal *; that God, who hath prohibited all violence, and all taking of vengeance, would miraculously interfere, to give the victory to him in whose favour the law ought to have decided. It is too probable, however, that the strong man armed, would sometimes charge a person he hated with offences of which he knew him to be guiltless; in full confidence that God would not so interfere; and that by his superior strength, or skill, he should be sure of conquering the innocent. And, if he succeeded in this, the law of chivalry condemned the vanquished defendant to be put to death on the spot, for not having confessed himself guilty of that with which he had been wrongfully charged.

If any improvement took place during Richard's reign, it was in the state of commerce. His example taught the English merchants to send their ships into the Mediterranean. And, at Hubert's suggestion, he made some useful enactments; ordering

* See p. 247, 248.

the same weights and measures, to be used throughout England; and liberally granting, that the property of vessels wrecked on the coast, should be preserved for the sons, daughters, brothers, or sisters, of the owner, in cases where, if he had perished, the goods used to be claimed for the crown.

CHAPTER VII.

JOHN, *surnamed* LACKLAND.

OF the five sons of Henry II. by his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, namely, William, Henry, Richard, Geoffry, and John, the three first had died without leaving any legitimate children. Geoffry was also dead; but by his wife Constance, heiress of Brittany*, he had left a son, Arthur, who, according to our present rules of inheritance, should now have succeeded to the possessions of his uncle Richard. John, however, put in a claim to be preferred before him; as standing in a nearer relation to the two last kings of England; inasmuch as he was brother to Richard and son of Henry, whilst Arthur was only nephew to the one and grandson to the other. This claim would have been thought valid by many, in that age, even if the two rivals had been equally able to maintain their rights. But Arthur was only a boy in his twelfth year, whereas John was in the prime of life, and though he had got the surname of Lackland, from his dependent condition on the king's bounty, he had once shared the government of England; and had acquired some popularity there by opposing Longchamp, and by crying out against the abuses of his brother's government. Hence

* See pp. 358 & 417.

whilst Arthur held Brittany as his own undisputed inheritance, and was acknowledged heir to Richard in the French provinces originally belonging to the family of Anjou *; the Normans submitted to John; the people of Aquitaine did the same, at the bidding of their princess Eleanor, the widow of Henry II.; and the English barons still claiming the right of choosing which of the members of the royal family should be their sovereign, declared, in a great council held at Northampton, that their choice also fell on John; conditioning, however, that he should swear to preserve the privileges of the Church, to improve the laws, and to exercise righteous judgment.

Having crossed over from the continent, John took a solemn oath to observe these conditions, and was then crowned at Westminster; but returned again into Normandy before the expiration of a month. In the meanwhile Philip had protested that, as king of France, it was for him to pronounce, who was properly the heir to those provinces which Richard had possessed within his dominions; and he admitted Arthur to do him homage, as succeeding to the dukedom of Normandy, as well as the provinces of Anjou, Touraine, Maine, and Brittany.

The consequence was a war between John and Philip, which continued, with occasional interruptions from the bargains each king was ready to make at the expence of the young prince's rights, till at length Arthur, being tempted to forget the respect due even to an unkind parent, took the command of a small force, proceeding to besiege his grandmother, queen Eleanor, in the castle of Mirabeau; and there he himself fell into the hands of his uncle the king of England.

Aug. 1,
1202.

The unhappy boy, when brought into the

* See p. 358.

presence of king John, offended him still farther by boldly declaring that, whilst he had life, he should ever continue to assert his claim to the English crown. He was soon after sent to Rouen, and confined in a tower of the castle; and, within a few weeks, he perished. The report was, that John, with his own hands, had stabbed his orphan nephew to the heart. It is certain, that when charged with the murder, he brought no proof that the young prince had come to his end in any other way.

The indignation excited by the assassination of Arthur, in those provinces where John had all along been regarded as an usurper of his nephew's rights, was blown into a flame by Guy de Thouars, the second husband of Constance; and by some powerful nobles whom John had recently exasperated, by marrying Isabella of Angoulesme, after she had been promised, and publicly betrothed to the count of La Marche. The Bretons appealed to the king of France, for justice against the murderer of their duke Arthur. And Philip gladly took advantage of this appeal; summoning John to appear before him, and to answer for a crime, which he was charged with having committed within the realm of France; of which realm the said John claimed to be a peer, as duke of Normandy. The king of England did not venture to refuse attention to this summons; but sent the bishop of Ely to say, that he was willing to answer this charge before the French sovereign, if he would give him a satisfactory safe-conduct, or pledge for his safety. 'Willingly,' said Philip, 'let him come in peace.' 'But,' asked the bishop, 'what do you say, my lord, for his return?' 'That,' answered the king, 'must depend on the judgment of his peers.' 'Then,' replied the bishop, 'as the duke of Normandy cannot submit to trial without danger to the king of England, they being one and the same person, the barons of England will not suffer their king to make his appearance here, even

if he should consent.' 'Tell me then, bishop,' said Philip, 'is a sovereign to lose his rights over one who continues to hold fiefs under him, because that vassal, being duke of Normandy, has got possession by violence of the crown of England?' The bishop could not say, Yes; because the feudal law, or the customs which regulated the claims and duties of a chief lord, and of those who held any sort of estate under him, forbade such an answer. Thus ended the conference; and the king of France went on to condemn John, though his absence prevented his being tried and convicted; and declared his continental possessions to be forfeited. This proceeding was more at variance with the feudal law than John's declining to appear before the peers of France. But king Philip was zealously assisted by the Bretons in collecting a force to put his sentence into execution; whilst the independent spirit of the Normans made them resist him at every step of his advance. John, meanwhile, was passing his time in idleness and debauchery at Rouen; but when one Norman fortress after another had fallen into Philip's hands, and the French army had already drawn near that city, the king of England fled across the sea.

At the summons of their sovereign the English barons joined him on the coast; but they refused to embark for the relief of Rouen. And now John's only remaining hope was in the interference of pope Innocent, of whom he had requested, that he would command Philip to proceed no farther. The pope was rejoiced at having such an excuse for interposing between kings, and accustoming them to receive his orders. He accordingly sent forth with a commission to two prelates; and boldly assumed the right of authorising these clergymen to decide the dispute between the monarchs of France and England. To persuade Philip to submit to this authoritative interference, he told him how the

Lord had commanded, that if a brother trespass, and would not listen to reason, nor to the arbitration of private friends, the sufferer should *tell it unto the Church*; and that if the offender neglected to hear, that is to attend to *the Church*, he should be regarded *as an heathen man, and a publican* *.

The Church is the whole congregation of believers; of whom the clergy are but a part, though an essential part, solemnly devoted to serve and instruct their lay brethren, in spiritual things. But whilst the popes misrepresented the last words of the Scripture above quoted, as authorising their unchristian sentences of excommunication; they made the other part serve them as an excuse for assuming the right to decide any disputes. To support this assumption, they took advantage of two mistakes, which had become very prevalent in that ignorant age. The one consisted in supposing that the Church, as here spoken of, meant the clergy alone: the other, that this supposed authority, conferred on the clergy, all centred in the pope, as their head. If the Scriptures had not been so sinfully neglected, men would have known, that as the courts of justice, in the time of the apostles, were held by idolaters, St. Paul, for that reason, bade the Christians rather refer their disputes to arbitrators chosen among themselves. But, even then, so far was he from desiring that this authority should be considered as belonging to the clergy, or bishop, that he said expressly, *If ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the Church* †; that is, who are thought least capable of devoting themselves with advantage to the edification of their brethren.

It is very probable, however, that the king of France thought Innocent's arguments strong enough.

* See Matt. xviii. 17.

† 1 Cor. vi. 4.

to make it his duty to obey; but ambition had a stronger hold of him than the fear of offending God by wilful disobedience. So he persisted in the prosecution of his plans; and Normandy became, again, really a part of the kingdom of France, after having been separated from it, in every thing but name, for above 290 years. Anjou, Maine, and Touraine, submitted to Philip more readily than Normandy had done; whilst the Bretons, finding that John persisted in retaining Arthur's sister in captivity, declared her rights transferred to Alice, a younger daughter of Constantia, by Guy de Thouars. Thus of all the French provinces once subject to Henry II. none remained in the possession of his family, except those which formed the dowry of queen Eleanor; who, being still alive, held them in her own right; for which reason they were not reckoned amongst John's forfeitures.

Henceforward England became much more important in the eyes of its sovereigns, who had hitherto prided themselves on receiving a royal title from it, but had preferred living on their richer possessions in France.

That our island could not afford its sovereign any great revenue, without being miserably oppressed, is evident from the low price of agricultural produce,—from the humble state of its manufactures,—and from the fact, that the Jews, Lombards*, and Florentines, who brought their money here to lend it out on usurious interest, found no rivals in that trade among the natives; there being none who possessed sufficient capital to carry it on. What small sums the farmer could raise by his labour, is ascertained from the prices of the quarter of wheat, specified in a proclamation issued by king John;

* These people have left traces of their influence on commerce, in the name of Lombard-street, still inhabited by money-dealers; and in the use of the word *ditto*, in accounts, equivalent, in their language, to *aforesaid*.

to regulate the weight of which the baker was to make the farthing or quartern loaf. A.D. 1203.
 This loaf had its name then given to it, from its price being the quarter of a penny. But as the shilling was three times as heavy then as now, and it regulated the value of every other denomination of coin, it will be more correct to call it the three-farthing loaf, and to name all other prices three times as high as they stand in the original; which we shall therefore proceed to do*.

The order of king John was drawn up by Geoffry Fitz-Peter, the Justiciary, after consulting his own baker and another, as to the rules which they thought would be most just and reasonable for the regulation of their trade. And every baker was required to obey this order, under pain of being set in the pillory. The proclamation proposed to allow a baker ninepence profit upon the quarter of wheat, over and above the bran, two loaves for the use of the oven, three-halfpence each for four serving-men, three-farthings for two boys, three-halfpence for salt, the same for yeast, three-farthings for candles, ninepence for brushwood, and three-half-pence for refuse in boultering. After making these allowances it was supposed the baker could afford to sell a three-farthing loaf of the weight specified in the proclamation; viz. 2lb. if made of fine flour, and 2lb. 10oz. if made of mixed flour, when wheat was nine shillings a quarter. But if the quarter of wheat rose above, or fell below this, then the three-farthing loaf was to be lighter, or heavier accordingly; and the regulation extended to the cases of its becoming twice as dear, and falling to half that price. These low prices proceeded from the scar-

* It should also be observed, that the quarter of corn is stated to have weighed 512lbs. troy, which is no more than 421lbs. avoirdupois. And as a quarter of good wheat will weigh 480lbs. this makes the ancient quarter of corn to be very little more than seven-eighths of the quarter now in use.

city of money, not from the abundance of corn; for the produce of the land could neither be plentiful nor steady, when manure was scarcely brought into use, except where marl could be had near. The general way of cultivating was to plough up a grass field, and sow it with wheat, and then proceed to another spot, as soon as the fertility of the first was exhausted; which is the occasion of our seeing marks of the plough, still remaining, in nearly every meadow throughout the country. Indeed the wages assigned to the baker's servants, of whom some perhaps ground the corn, show that wheat could not properly be called cheap, at what was then its middle price; for three-halfpence a day would only buy 5lb. 4oz. of household bread; whereas the wages of a day-labourer at present will procure 8lb. and a half.

An unforeseen event now involved the king in a long course of difficulties. The monks of Canterbury had often endeavoured to get the election of an archbishop entirely into their own hands; and that high office becoming vacant by the death of Hubert, some of the younger monks assembled in secret, on the very night of his death, and seated Reginald, their sub-prior, in the archbishop's throne. Their next object was to induce the pope to ratify an election made without the usual license from the king, and to grant Reginald the pall. To prevent this from being opposed by any of the parties whose rights they aimed at defeating, the monks made Reginald swear that he would keep his elevation a secret, till he could sound the pope, as to his willingness to sanction what they had done. But no sooner had Reginald reached the continent on his way to the papal court, than his vanity led him to announce himself as the archbishop elect of Canterbury. The news of this was immediately brought to England; and the monks, enraged at his thus prematurely betraying

their secret, confessed themselves conscious that their late proceedings had been illegal, and that the election was consequently void. They now sent to the king for licence to elect an archbishop; and being aware that they had justly angered him by their previous neglect of this important form, they endeavoured to make their peace by choosing his favourite minister, John Gray; at this time bishop of Norwich. Gray was accordingly enthroned, in the presence of the king; and he was sent off, accompanied by twelve of the monks, with letters from the king, recommending him and his cause to the pope.

Innocent III. heard both claimants, and then declared the election of Reginald to be null, from want of attention to the due formalities; and that of Gray equally so, as made under the assumption that Reginald's election might be deemed void before the papal court had decided upon it. Some such sentence as this had been thought not unlikely by John's ministers; and they had, in consequence, provided the deputation with the necessary documents for proceeding to a new election on the spot, and had made the monks swear that they would again choose the bishop of Norwich. This oath they were disposed to observe; but Innocent told them, that the king's rights necessarily ceased, in the case of an election taking place within the precincts of the papal court; and that he would excommunicate them if they did not, forthwith, elect the person whom he himself should name to them. As for their oath to the king, the popes had wickedly taught, that any oath tending to the disadvantage of the privileges of the clergy, was not binding.

Good, however, came out of all this evil. For the pope, who aimed at establishing a precedent for nominating archbishops by his own authority, was conscious that the opposition, likely to be made against this first instance of it, would be sufficient

to defeat his object; unless he named a person of irreproachable character in the eyes of the world, and resolute enough to bear up unmoved against the passionate threats of the king of England. Such a person Innocent found, in Cardinal Stephen Langton, an Englishman, whose learning had raised him to an honourable situation in the university of Paris; and whose promotion to the archbishopric of Canterbury, though very improperly forced upon the English nation, in contempt of its just rights, became the means of establishing its liberties upon a firmer foundation than they had before.

When pope Innocent wrote John word, A.D. 1207. that Langton had been lawfully elected archbishop, and requested he might be kindly received, the indignation of the king was very great. He turned the monks of Canterbury out of their monastery, with an armed force; and banished them from England. He also sent a letter to the pope, in which he declared that he never would suffer the election of bishop Gray to be set aside; that if the papal court continued to thwart him, he would prevent the sending over of those large sums which the popes drew from England; and, lastly, that having several prelates among his own subjects, learned enough for the purpose, he would henceforward have all causes decided at home. In reply, Innocent told him, that if the matter came to a contest, the victory would certainly belong to that divine person, to whom *every knee must bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth*; whose place, he had the shocking presumption to add, 'I fill, however, unworthily, on earth. But if you will humbly repose on me, I will take care that your rights suffer no injury.'

Finding that this insolent letter had no A.D. 1208. effect, Innocent ordered the bishops of London, Ely, and Worcester, to wait upon the king, and tell him that England should be put under an

Interdict *, if he continued obstinate in his rebellion against the pope, and did not immediately invite Langton over, and recal the monks of Canterbury. At this message, John, never well able to command his passions, swore, that if the clergy attended to any such interdict, he would send them over, one and all, to the pope, and confiscate all their property; and that, if he should discover any of the pope's subjects in any part of his dominions, they should be sent back to Rome, with their faces so marked that all people should know them. He farther desired the prelates to get speedily out of his presence, if they set any value on their personal safety. But intemperate threats are always less attended to than the more moderate warnings of an evidently sensible man. The bishops withdrew indeed directly, from his presence; but on the Monday in Passion-week, they proclaimed the interdict; and declared it to extend over all England.

For above six years the clergy, complying with this sentence, shut up their churches. No religious service was, all this time, performed with its usual solemnities. The baptism of infants was the only sacrament regularly permitted to be administered, to any but the dying. But, though marriage is reckoned amongst the sacraments by the Romish Church, the celebration of marriages was allowed to take place at the church door. As for the dead, they were buried like dogs by the road sides, or in ditches, without an attendant priest, and without prayer, which last was then thought essential to save the soul of the departed from the imagined fire of purgatory and its pains. Thus did the pope, whilst calling himself the representative of Christ, and the chief shepherd of Christ's flock, deprive a whole nation of what ought to have been to them the means of grace; in order to compel its king to sub-

* See p. 268.

mit to him in a dispute about, what is called, the right of patronage. Nor was John, in his turn, less determined to indulge his anger. He sent orders, through the sheriffs, that all prelates and abbots should quit the kingdom directly, and call on the pope to do their sovereign justice.

In this, however, he was not obeyed. The prelates who proclaimed the interdict, had, indeed, already fled abroad; and their relations were stripped of their property and cast into gaol. But others kept within the precincts of their cathedrals, or abbies; and the sheriffs chose to consider the king's command as not extending to authorise their breaking into privileged places. Yet many of the estates belonging to bishoprics and monasteries, were put into the custody of laymen; and all rents and produce, belonging to ecclesiastics, were declared to be confiscated, and were very generally seized for the use of the king.

'Besides this,' says a monkish historian, 'the concubines of the priests and other clergy, throughout all England, were taken into custody by the king's officers; and were forced to pay a heavy price, to purchase back their liberty!' What frightful wickedness must have overspread the land, when the submission of the clergy, to that artful law of their church, which forbade marriage, was so generally attended, as these words imply, with disobedience to that holy law of God which commands all men to *abstain from fornication* *. But the power of the popes had now been long directed to terrifying men out of the commission of offences against the rules, or privileges of the Church; whilst the dread lest God should punish offences against His laws, had been decreasing more and more, through the evident indifference to sin of those reputed His ministers; and through their

* 1. Thess. iv. 3.

leading men to believe that His declared wrath against wickedness might be turned aside by penances, by crusades, or even by the payment of money. And the consequence upon the minds of men was, that *the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom*, was wholly changed into the fear of a corrupt church; which can only serve for the foundation of a slavish superstition. Thus, the subjects of king John had seen, that neither the ingratitude which had broken his father's heart, nor the base treachery of endeavouring to keep in captivity a brother who had been lavish in bounty to him, drew down upon him any severe sentence, or even rebukes, from Rome, though the attention of the popes had been called to both these parts of his conduct. But now, before the king had proceeded to any farther excess in his dispute than speaking rudely of an attack upon those privileges which his predecessors had enjoyed, he and his country were at once deprived, as it seemed to them, of permission to approach God in any acceptable way.

That criminal employment of ecclesiastical authority, whereby offences against the Church were put down with unrelenting severity, whilst actions otherwise displeasing to God, and instances of rebellion against His laws, remained unpunished, was not confined to matters of state, which have generally been judged by looser principles than the conduct of individuals. It reached to every thing of which the priests chose to take cognizance; and thus it taught men to try all actions by a false rule; whence arose the most pitiable blindness, as to the real guilt of many iniquities perpetrated in this age.

Two examples will sufficiently mark the extent to which this abuse of natural justice was carried.

King Richard had taken the bishop of Beauvais prisoner in battle; and, refusing to release him, received a message from the pope; who said, 'I charge you to beware of violating the privileges of

the Church, and to restore my dear son to liberty forthwith.' In reply, the king sent the bishop's coat of iron mail, all stained with human blood; and, using the words of a Scripture narrative too interesting to be neglected in the darkest ages, and of which even Mahometans have preserved the memory. He bade his messenger say, *Know now whether it be thy son's coat or not.* The rebuke, thus conveyed, prevented the pope from urging the bishop's deliverance any farther. But he recovered his liberty, and returned to his see; for the papal court took no steps to deprive him of the holy office of bishop; though his unfitness for it had been made a matter of notoriety over Europe.

In king John's reign, this same prelate again distinguished himself in the field of battle, and struck the earl of Salisbury to the ground with an iron club, which he used instead of a sword, that he might kill men without shedding their blood. The law of the Church required bishops to abstain from bloodshed; to the letter of this law he paid some attention. The law of God hath said, a bishop must be *no striker nor brawler**; of this law he made no account. Another French bishop was in the same battle, but he declined bearing arms, though he made no scruple of taking an elevated station, from whence he directed the movements of the army, and sent orders how others were to fight. And

July 27, this battle was fought on the day set apart
1214. for observing *the Sabbath of the Lord our God, to keep it holy.*

Yet this open defiance of the laws of the Most High, committed by men who had especially taken upon them to honor and obey Him, was entirely overlooked by the self-styled head of the Church, because neither the pope, nor the clergy, felt the interest of their order affected by their sins.

* 1 Tim. iii. 3.

On the other hand, respect for the laws of God weighed as nothing, where there was but a suspicion that the laws of the Romish Church were despised. Of this a very sad example occurs in an account recorded by one English monk, Ralph of Coggeshall, on the authority of another, Gervase of Tilbury, who was a principal party concerned. So dreadful are the effects of human corruption, that when the Lord, in his just anger, wholly withdraws his correcting influence, and gives up any sinner to follow the workings of a reprobate mind, there is no crime so horrible, that temptation and opportunity may not lead him to commit it. And this holds true of every age and country. But the proof that a most lamentably perverted system of morals obtained in this unhappy age, is to be drawn not so much from the frightful crime perpetrated, as from the absence of all shame in the man who had a chief share in it, and of all horror in the man who heard and recorded it; whilst neither the one nor the other expected to be thought, nor were thought, by their neighbours, to be at all worse than the average of those around them. Ralph of Coggeshall introduces his story with an observation, that heresy was now spreading in every direction, and that the heretics were sometimes discovered in a very remarkable manner. 'For example,' says he; 'the archbishop of Rheims was once riding out of the town, attended by several of his priests, and amongst others by canon Gervase of Tilbury; who told me the story himself, and who happened to observe a young woman walking alone in a vineyard. With the curiosity of youth Gervase drew near, and asked her what she was doing there alone; which gave him an opportunity of observing that she was beautiful.' The language which follows, on his part, we shall not repeat after the monk; but Ralph of Coggeshall soon proceeds, as follows. 'The girl then, with a simplicity of manner, but with a

certain gravity of words, replied, without looking him in the face, God forbid, good young man; that I should ever consent to this sin with you, or any other; for if I were thus defiled, doubtless I should perish everlastingly. On hearing this language, Gervase immediately comprehended, that she must belong to that wicked sect of publicans, for whom search was now making every where, especially by the governor of that country, who, with a just severity, put them to death without mercy. Whilst he was still disputing with the girl, and endeavouring to convince her of her error, the archbishop came up; and, being informed of the subject of her conversation, he ordered his attendants to arrest the young woman, and take her to the town jail.'

There she was questioned strictly, who had taught her to reply as she did. It so happened, that the Romish priests, though declaring that marriage was too unholy a state for themselves to enter into, had made it a charge against those true Christians whom they falsely called heretics, that they spoke of chastity in terms which amounted to the forbidding of marriage. On this ground the young woman whom they had thus haled to prison, was accused of heresy, and condemned, with the mother who had brought her up thus virtuously in a dissolute age, to be burned to death.

What an awful evidence is this to the truth of those Scriptures which declare Satan to be *the prince of this world* *,—*the ruler of its darkness* †,—*the Spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience* ‡. But though Satan rage, and though his seed bruise the heel of the children of God, yet the Holy Spirit has deigned to call *the trial of their faith much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire*; and as intended to

* John xiv. 30.

† Eph. vi. 12.

‡ Eph. ii. 2.

lead *unto praise and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ* *. He who had taught this humble maiden to fear Him, rather than those who could only kill the body, sustained her in the last conflict. She submitted with such calm resolution to the cruel death, which *the children of disobedience* had been wrought upon to condemn her *unto*, that they, who were incapable of understanding whence her support came, attributed her beautiful resignation to magic. Thus was she taken from a world that was not worthy of her, into the presence of that *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, who hath said, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne* †.

When the Christian religion was represented by its ministers as countenancing such injustice and wickedness, as popes and prelates thus publicly exhibited in their conduct, we cannot wonder that they who suffered from their iniquity, and who sought not instruction by prayer and reading of the Scriptures, found these things *too hard for them*, and wandered aside into unbelief.

Such was the temptation into which king John was now suffered to fall. He knew nothing of *the faith of the Gospel*; but supposed, that it required kings to submit with humility to any commands issued by that ambitious priest, the pope. On the other hand, he heard that Mahometan princes were not disturbed in the government of their states by any similar demands from the Mahometan priesthood. Fearing, therefore, that Innocent would yet succeed in driving his superstitious subjects into rebellion, and being conscious that they could now have no affection for his person, to withhold them from it, the king sent messengers into Spain, to the Moorish chief, Mahomet el Nasir, with offers to

* 1 Pet. i. 7.

† Rev. iii. 21.

acknowledge himself his vassal, and to turn Mahometan. This prince, or emir, had not recovered all that was once subject to the Moors of Spain; but John heard him styled king of Spain, Africa, and Morocco; and ignorantly supposed that an alliance with him would secure to himself a very valuable protection.

Such a message, were not only two English gentlemen found to deliver, but even a monk, Robert of London, consented to take his share in thus offering to *deny the Lord that bought them*. When the emir heard for what purpose these ambassadors had come, he could not conceal his contempt, both for them and their king; who was thus willing to barter his faith for assistance, which the Mahometan knew himself to be unable to afford. But, as they withdrew, he ordered Robert to be called back into his presence. It seems that the ill-favored countenance and mishapen form of the monk impressed the emir with the thought, that such a personage would never have been sent to discredit the embassy by his mean appearance, if he were not a man of such talents as induced his employer to overlook that disadvantage. Under this notion, he required the monk to tell him frankly, what judgment he had formed of the king, at whose bidding he had come on such an errand. When John was dead, this man did not scruple to relate amongst his friends that, in reply, he had described his sovereign as a dissolute coward, and a tyrant, to whose will the English too patiently submitted. In return for his thus exposing the folly, and the crimes, of the master whom he had undertaken to serve, the emir made him several presents; which the crafty monk afterwards shewed to the king, as a proof that he had delivered his message in a more acceptable manner than the knights, his colleagues in the embassy. This man evidently *loved evil more than good, and lying rather than to speak righteousness*;

but John had sought *the help of them that work iniquity*; and he was deceived accordingly. The end of this affair was of a piece with the rest. For the king gave the custody of the estates of St. Alban's abbey to the monk Robert, for his supposed faithful services. So doing, he was taking property, intended by the donors to be especially devoted to the honour of Christ; and paying, therewith, the wages which, he thought, had been earned by denying Christ.

In the mean while the king and the pope went on after the usual way of *evil men*; of whom it is said, *they shall wax worse and worse* *. The loss of his continental possessions having very much diminished the king's lawful revenues, and neither his character nor authority being sufficient to enable him to levy taxes adequate to the expences of his profligate way of living, he made use of frivolous, and sometimes even of insulting pretexts, for compelling different nobles to pay him, in fines, what he dared not offer to impose upon them as a body. Thus the countess of Warwick was made to pay a fine of 1000*l.* for leave to remain a widow as long as she should choose. A bishop was fined for not reminding the king that he had promised to give the countess of Albemarle a girdle. Suitors were forced to pay heavy fines to obtain justice; and large sums were received by the king as bribes for preventing a just sentence from being passed by his judges. He also ordered the Jews to be arrested throughout England, and imprisoned, or even tortured, till they would consent to his demands upon them. A Bristol Jew having refused to purchase his liberty at the required price, John sent an order to have one of his teeth pulled out every day, till he had paid 10,000 marks of silver. This the unhappy man suffered, rather than part with his money, till seven had been forced out; but on the eighth day he

shrunk under the pain, and submitted to pay the sum thus extorted from him.

To gather spoil, or to obtain a character for bravery on easier terms than combating the king of France, John led several military expeditions into Ireland, Scotland, and Wales; whose inhabitants were compelled to buy off these attacks by the payment of money, and surrender of hostages. And when the impatience of the Welch led them to attempt reprisals, the unfeeling king of England ordered eight and twenty boys, the sons of their principal gentry, to be hung before he took his breakfast. The wives and daughters of several English noblemen received from him a far worse injury than the killing of the body; being seduced by him into the commission of sins which destroy the soul.

The pope now perceived that king John instead of strengthening himself at home, by gaining the respect and attachment of his people, had made himself almost as many enemies as subjects and neighbours; wherefore, without more delay, he issued out a special excommunication against the king of England; presumptuously assuming the right to declare his subjects released from their oaths of allegiance; and ordering all men to abstain from sharing his table, his conversation, or his council. On this John forced some of the nobility to put their children into his hands, as pledges that they would not obey the papal decree against him. But the pope proceeded still farther, and summoned all the nobility of Europe to a crusade against king John; and promised Philip, king of France, remission of all his sins, with the kingdom of England besides as his fee, for expelling a sovereign, with whom Philip had solemnly sworn to maintain peace *.

* In the earliest crusades it was seen, that the lawless who served in them, were often nearly as mischievous as the hordes of savages would have been, to the Christian

The English nobility hearing that the pope had thus taken upon him to give the kingdom away, without asking their consent, mustered their followers, on John's summons; and a camp of 60,000 men was formed on Barham Downs, prepared to repel invasion. But the king was aware that their

nations through whose territories they had occasion to pass. But pope Innocent III. was guilty of teaching this ignorant generation that to fight their fellow Christians, at his bidding was a meritorious act; and the certain means of obtaining from Him who commanded us to love one another, that forgiveness which they wished to earn. And this pope not only bade them draw their swords against any king who should venture, as in the case of John, to resist his orders; but he urged them to fight under the banner of the cross against the Albigenses, (see p. 369), the only truly Christian people of that age. At this very time an immense army of crusaders was employed in the south of France, in an unsuccessful endeavour to quench the light of the Gospel in blood, by cutting off every man, woman, and child, who would not bow down before the idols set up by the church of Rome.

But they whose swords had made many childless, were, in the following year, 1213, made childless themselves; by a dreadful consequence of that delusion with which the blind leaders of the blind had filled those, who listened to them, instead of searching the Scriptures. A boy, whose head was turned by what he heard, went chaunting through villages and towns, 'Lord Jesu Christ, restore to us thy cross;' meaning thereby the senseless piece of wood, which was far more thought of than the work wrought by Him who suffered thereon. Boys of his own age listened; and followed him; and took up the same chaunt. Their increasing numbers increased the fascination, which drew others to join them; till the childish crowd carried with it every child that quitted the nursery or school, to gaze. The equally deluded parents were stupified with awe; and dared not to keep back their own children. Others brought out food in pity; or to gain merit by supplying a host whose pure hands, they said, were alone fit to conquer again *the holy city*. Soon the continually swelling numbers became too great to be thus fed; and thousands perished by the waysides. Yet they reached the shores of the Mediterranean a little multitude; and then they got into every boat and ship, whilst the mariners gave way in superstitious amazement, and knew not how to controul them. And thus they put to sea, and all were lost.

The Romish churchmen say, that Satan devised this scheme to discourage crusades, by making a mock of them; and they reckon the infants of which he thus bereaved their church at no less than ninety thousand.

hearts were not with him. He trembled at hearing of the preparations which Philip had made for conquest; and he listened to two templars*, who told him that Pandulf, a papal legate, was on the opposite coast, ready to propose terms on which he might yet be reconciled to the church; though, they added, the papal court has already passed a sentence, declaring you no longer king.

* Two knights, Hugh Payne, and Godfrey de St. Omer, wishing to unite the supposed merits of monks and crusaders, founded the Order of Templars; so called from a street at Jerusalem given up to them, to be the home and first property of this new society. Like monks, the templars were sworn to live in perpetual chastity, and under certain rules, and to obey implicitly the head of their order. Like the crusaders, they were to be constantly at war with infidels. Their dress was a white mantle, with a red cross on the shoulder. And the seal of their order bore the figure of a horse carrying two armed riders, in memory of the humble beginning from which their society had risen. For Hugh and Godfrey were once so poor as to have but one horse between them.

As, however, the rich were, in these ages, taught to believe, that a man might obtain the redemption of his sins at the expence of his children, or relations, by bequeathing his property to some one of those called religious orders, instead of his proper heirs; and as the warlike nobles naturally preferred an order possessing a great reputation for bravery, the templars soon received bequests of lands in every province of Europe; and their head, or grand master, was in reality a rich and powerful prince. But the institution, and its system of *worship* were unblest. The wealth of the templars corrupted them more and more; their strict rules tempted them to peculiar wickedness; and their bravery to pride. And then, their wealth made the kings of Europe greedy to seize on their possessions; their wickedness formed an excuse for putting them down; and their pride made their degradation popular. Hence the order was abolished by pope Clement V. in 1312, to gratify the avarice of Philip the Fair, king of France, after it had existed about 200 years.

In England some of the Inns of court still preserve the name of the Temple, being erected on what was once the property of the templars; and the chapel of that establishment, with the church at Cambridge called St. Sepulchre's, remain as specimens of their of way building. The circular form given to part of each is, in its shape and style, an imitation of the church which then stood over what was believed by them to be the sepulchre of our Lord; which they had particularly bound themselves to honour and defend.

The result of this conversation was, that the Templars were desired to return immediately, and invite Pandulf over. When the legate came, he artfully increased king John's terror, by ^{May 13,} _{1213.} his description of Philip's powerful armament; and by adding, that the king of France had received letters from nearly all the chief nobility of England, promising to join him as soon as he should land. But by humbling yourself, said he, you may yet, through the clemency of the pope, recover that kingdom, which, for your obstinacy, you had been sentenced to lose.

Among the reasons which inclined John to listen to Pandulf's advice, was his alarm at a prophecy hazarded by Peter of Pomfret, a Yorkshire hermit. This man had ventured to declare, that before Ascension day the king would cease to reign. And though John affected to despise the man and his words, he was secretly afraid that the prediction might be fulfilled in some way more painful to himself than submitting for a while to the pope's sentence of deprivation. Men void of religion are generally superstitious. As it is said, *They who have not called upon God, are in great fear, there where no fear is* *. It wanted but three days to Ascension-day. He did not dare to wait its arrival. So a step which should have been maturely weighed, in proportion to its importance, was taken in haste. The king that day bound himself to receive Langton, as archbishop of Canterbury; to recall the other prelates and clergy, who had fled, or been driven out of the kingdom, and to make them a sufficient compensation for their losses. On the eve of Ascension the king farther submitted ^{May 13.} to every humiliation Pandulf chose to require of him. In the house of the Templars near Dover, he took off his crown, laid it at Pandulf's feet,

signed a document declaring that he yielded the kingdom of England to the pope, with all rights belonging to the same, for the remission of his own sins and those of his family, both the living and the dead; and that henceforward he only reigned as the pope's vassal. He also pledged himself to pay annually 700 marks to his sovereign lord the pope, as a quit-rent for holding England under him, and 300 more for Ireland; and kneeling down at the feet of Pandulf, he took the oath of homage to the pope, in the form usually required from subjects. To these documents several English barons and bishops affixed their seals, choosing rather to see their king thus degraded, than to fight for him in a war, in which, if successful, they could only expect him to become more a tyrant than he was already. When, however, the king humbly made his first offering in money, as the earnest of his subjection, and the legate had the insolence to trample upon the English coin, affecting to consider it as beneath his notice, the archbishop of Dublin could not refrain from expressing aloud his grief and indignation.

If Pandulf kept the crown five days before he restored it, John's superstitious fears of Peter of Pomfret's prophecy, had actually brought to pass what all men would consider as its complete fulfilment; and yet the king now declared the man publicly convicted of being a false pretender to prophetic knowledge, and had the cruelty to order that he should be dragged at a horse's tail from Corfe castle to Wareham, and there hung.

The legate Pandulf now returned to France, laden with a larger sum of English money than that he had trampled on; and ordered king Philip to abstain from any attacks upon a kingdom which was become the property of the papal see. The king of France was naturally much provoked at finding that he was invited to conquer and take possession

of the crown of England, it was only intended that he should be used as a tool for terrifying John into submission to the pope, and he protested against thus losing £60,000, which he had been tempted, by the pope's offer, to expend in hiring and fitting out ships, and collecting victuals and arms. But he found many who had joined him, as for a crusade, were superstitiously afraid of disobeying the pope; and others, particularly the earl of Flanders, were glad of an excuse for preventing him from growing too powerful. So he was obliged to submit to seeing himself duped by Innocent, who was thought a skilful politician for having turned the ambition and power of the king of France to such advantage.

When Philip found himself forced to give up his projects for the conquest of England, he looked around him for some other use to make of the means collected under his command; and, affecting peculiar indignation at having been opposed by the earl of Flanders, he bade that prince quit his court, and swore, that either 'Flanders should become France, or France Flanders.' In his attempt, however, to carry this oath into effect, he was foiled by the fleet which John had prepared to oppose his crossing the channel, and which was now sent over to the coast of Flanders, at the request of its earl. The French knights having disembarked, had left their vessels almost unprotected, when the English fleet, coming unexpectedly upon them, cut the cables of 300 transports, laden with corn, wine, and other provisions and stores, and sent them off to England, besides burning a hundred more, which lay aground.

But whether affairs took a favourable or unfavourable turn, the folly of king John always made them prove calamitous to him in the end. Elated with this victory, he put off sending his promised letters of recall to the prelates; determined to attempt the recovery of all he had once possessed in France; and summoned the military tenants of

the crown to meet him at Portsmouth. The barons came, but refused to follow him abroad, till he should fulfil the conditions on which his own absolution, and the removal of the interdict, yet depended. He was therefore now obliged to write to Langton and his brethren; promising them a kind reception, and reasonable compensation, as before agreed. That these letters might be credited, four-and-twenty barons added their signatures.

The archbishop and the exiles landed soon after, and they were met by the king, as they entered Winchester to wait upon him. It would have been wise in John to have given them a frank reception, and to have told Langton, that, though forced upon him contrary to old usages, he would prove a kind sovereign, if he found him a faithful subject. But the king, as if he wished to make himself contemptible in the eyes of his people, flung himself on the ground before the bishops, and, with real or pretended tears, besought their pity for himself and the kingdom. Langton, a shrewd man, could not fail to perceive that this was either base hypocrisy, July 20. or childish folly. He proceeded, however, to give the king formal absolution, after making him swear that he would restore the good laws of his predecessors, particularly those of the Confessor; that he would repeal all unjust laws; would confirm the just judgments of his court; give to every one his rights; obey the pope as his lord; and make full restitution to the injured clergy before the next Easter.

The nobles now were more and more convinced, that, under such a leader, any attack upon Philip, who was both politic and brave, could only end in defeat and disappointment. They therefore made the expence they had already been at, in waiting on the coast, to serve them as an excuse for again refusing to attend the king abroad, unless he would give them with money to refit themselves; whereas

they knew that his treasury had been emptied to meet the demands of the churchmen. Enraged at this refusal, John exposed his folly still farther, by setting off for the conquest of France with his own domestics only; in the expectation that the nobles would still come after him. But having waited some time in Jersey, and finding that nobody followed him, he was obliged to return to England.

There the archbishop, Geoffry Fitzpeter the justiciary*, and other nobles, had already held a council at St. Albans without him; and had issued proclamations, declaring the laws of Henry I. to be in force, and all other objectionable laws to be invalid.

As angry at these proceedings, as at their late desertion of him, the king collected an army; and, breathing nothing but vengeance, marched in search of the barons. But Langton met him, and told him, that to make war with his barons before they had been convicted in his courts of any crime, would be a violation of the oath he had so lately taken; and gave notice to his attendants, that he would excommunicate every body but the king, if any hostile steps were taken, whilst the pope was yet deliberating whether the interdict should be withdrawn from off the nation. This firmness prevailed, though the king talked loudly of not submitting to any ecclesiastical dictation.

A meeting of the bishops and nobility took place soon after at London, in St. Paul's Aug. 25.

* The justiciary united in his own person, at this time, the authority and employments of our present chief justices of the King's Bench, and Common Pleas, and of the Chief Baron of the Exchequer. He was also regent, or governor of the kingdom, in the sovereign's absence. The important charge of the king's wards, and of vacant bishoprics, which belonged to the chancellor in Becket's time, seems to have been attached, in this and the following reign to the office of justiciary; whilst the chancellor, during these reigns, was little more than secretary to the king.

church. There Langton, addressing the assembly, observed, that men were disposed to look back to the reign of Henry I. as a time of better laws; and that he had found a copy of that monarch's charter*, which had formerly been sent to a sheriff of Hertfordshire; and which he would now read to them. When he had made an end of reading this document, the barons loudly declared their satisfaction, at what they had heard. And they united in taking a solemn oath before the archbishop, that, at a convenient time they would contend, even to death, if needful, for the like liberties to those which Henry had thus granted to their forefathers.

The king was now surrounded with such difficulties as would have embarrassed a much wiser man. For the money he had raised by seizing the property of the prelates and clergy was all spent; and he was now pressed to repay it, to the amount of above 100,000 marks, at a time when the nobles had conspired to resist any irregular taxation. His ordinary resources were inadequate to raising any such sum, in addition to the necessary expences of the crown. And though, to relieve him, the pope's legate lowered the demands of the clergy, he on the other hand deprived the king of the rents of the vacant bishoprics and abbies, by promoting persons to them on the nomination of the pope, who now formally assumed that right. But, notwithstanding all these embarrassments, John was so infatuated as to fix on this most inconvenient season for invading France; and actually landed in Poitou, where the old vassals of his family soon collected a large army around him. With this force he entered the territories of the French king, and was completely defeated in a great battle fought at Bouvines; after which he was fain to return into England poorer by 40,000 marks, than when he left it.

* See pp. 317, and 339.

Whilst he was abroad, the legate had taken off the interdict; declaring the pope satisfied with the king's submission. But the nobility, in the mean while, had further arranged their measures for restraining the powers of a sovereign whose incapacity and misconduct made him unfit to govern. 1215. On the following feast of Epiphany, they put into his hands a petition, begging that he would be pleased to confirm to them the liberties granted by the charter of Henry I. This John requested to have time for considering; and he persuaded the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop of Ely, and the earl of Pembroke, to become pledges for his giving the barons a satisfactory answer by Easter. But when the nobles had consented to the delay, he took advantage of it to put on the cross of a crusader. Not that he had any intention of going on a crusade; but because the laws of the church required all persons to abstain from injuring a crusader in his property, or rights, under penalty of excommunication; to which the barons, therefore, would expose themselves, if they still persisted in requiring him to resign any portion of that authority he had hitherto possessed.

The nobility, however, knew that the archbishop's wishes were theirs; so they were not much afraid of his launching any sentence of excommunication against them. A great number of barons therefore, met, with one consent, at Stamford, the week after Easter; and proceeded from thence with two thousand knights, their esquires, and followers, to Brackley. From this place they deputed the archbishop, and the earl of Pembroke, to wait on the king at Oxford; to shew him the list of their demands, and to inform him that if he would not consent to them, they should proceed to attack his castles, and seize his lands. The archbishop, accordingly, read the list in the presence of the king,

who, bursting into a scornful laugh, said, 'Why did not the barons ask my kingdom at once?' And swore, that he would never grant them such liberties, as would make him no better than a slave.

On receiving this reply, the barons, straight-way, attacked Northampton castle; took possession of Bedford; and were then invited by the citizens to proceed with their forces, and enter London; from whence they sent letters to such of the nobility as had not yet joined them, requiring each to do it forthwith, or expect to be treated as a public enemy.

The king was now sufficiently alarmed, and sent off messengers to treat with the barons; by whom it was agreed, that he and they should meet, on the 15th of June, in a large meadow called Runnimead, between Staines and Windsor.

On that spot, at the appointed time, John, accompanied by Pandulf, Langton, several prelates, and some others, noblemen and courtiers, met the great body of the baronage of England; and after some debate the king promised, for himself and his successors to confirm and observe all the articles contained in two charters, which were drawn up in his name, and ratified by the seals of the chief persons present.

One of the two was to put an end to the inroads on private property, and the vexatious disputes, maintained under pretence of preserving the royal forests, or chaces. It contained what were then valuable concessions; but has long passed into neglect, with the abuses which it was devised to remedy*. The other, called The Great Charter, or

* Amongst the articles of this Forest charter, one particularly marks the manners of those times.

By it any archbishop, or bishop, if passing through a royal forest, on his way to or from attendance on the king, was permitted to catch one or two deer for his own use, in the forester's presence; but if the forester was not within sight, a horn was to be sounded, that it might be understood the thing was not lawful.

more frequently by its Latin name, Magna Charta, contains a list of regulations for the checking of every kind of oppression then dreaded.

Of these regulations, those of the greatest and most lasting importance are such as follow.—

1. That all ancient privileges of the church, nobility, freemen, and boroughs, shall stand good.

2. That no tax, or scutage, shall be imposed upon the kingdom without consent of parliament; unless for the redemption of the king from captivity, the ceremony of making his eldest son a knight, or marrying his eldest daughter.

3. That for the imposing of any other tax, the prelates, nobles, and other tenants of the crown should be summoned to parliament; having forty days notice of the time, and occasion, for which they are summoned.

4. That no freeman shall be taken, nor imprisoned, nor deprived of his property, or liberties, nor be outlawed, nor banished, but by the judgment of his equals; or by the law of the land.

5. That no man shall be fined in more than a just proportion to his offence. And that the fine shall not in any case be ruinous; but shall always leave the person fined in possession of the tools, or other means, whereby he has been wont to gain his livelihood. So that the merchant shall not be deprived of his merchandize; nor yet the bondman, or villain, as he was called, of his cart and plough.

6. The court of Common Pleas, in which all questions of law between subject and subject were decided, was no longer to move about with the king, but to be held in some fixed place.

7. The king was not to sell, deny, or delay, right or justice to any one.

8. County assizes to be held once a year; by judges sent into the country, aided by certain knights in the shire.

9. One measure and weight is to be used throughout the kingdom.

10. All merchants, unless the contrary be publicly notified, are to be allowed to come into the kingdom and quit it in safety; to move about, or remain, for buying and selling. And the merchants of a nation going to war with England are only to be arrested, without injury to their persons or property, till it be known how the English merchants have been used in their country. And if the English have been allowed to dwell uninjured, the merchants of the hostile nation here shall be treated in like manner.

11. Every person is at liberty to leave the kingdom, and to enter it again in safety; except outlaws, or persons under arrest.

12. Lastly; all the privileges granted or confirmed by the king to his nobles and tenants, in this charter, are in like manner to be allowed by the prelates, nobles and gentry, to their dependents.

Thus, by the blessing of God, were the folly and misrule of king John made the means of uniting the English nobility and bishops to bring about a measure, the beneficial effects of which have been far beyond what they could foresee. In these charters the great landmarks of English liberty were laid down; and in the worst times they have never, since, been wholly removed.

The pious compilers of our Liturgy have taught us to acknowledge, that the hearts of princes are under the rule and governance of God, and that He doth dispose and turn them, as it seemeth best to His godly wisdom. And if this guiding influence may ever be known by its effects, there is enough to call forth our thankfulness in the liberality and integrity, with which the hearts of these English nobles were disposed to regulate their conduct on this great occasion.

We have seen that, when the king had rejected their petition with scorn, they were not provoked thereby to advance against their sovereign, and attack his person; but drew off their forces, and contented themselves with reducing some of his castles, that their stores and garrisons might not furnish him with the means of enslaving the nation. And when they found themselves strong enough to settle the government as they chose, they yet so far respected the rights of the king, as well as their own, that no proposal was made to imprison or dethrone him. Neither did they use their superiority to bargain for additional titles for any of their party; nor for grants of estates; nor for privileges which should exempt them from taxation, by transferring the burden to those who were less able to make resistance. But they generously made it a part of their covenant with the king, that their inferiors should receive, from them, the like benefits to those which they had asked for themselves from him. Nor did they forget what was due to others, who had no representatives in the council assembled at Runnimead; but wisely provided for the safety of foreign merchants; and nobly remembered, that the cart and plough of the despised bondman provided him with bread, and had therefore a claim, as well as the baron's lands, to be protected from an oppressive sentence.

It has been remarked of these last provisions in Magna Charta, that nothing so disinterested, or so liberal, ever entered into any of those stipulations which the nobles of France, Germany, and Spain, have, each in their turn, exacted at different periods from their respective sovereigns. And He who observes, to bless, even the gift of *a cup of cold water**, seems to have accepted this care for the rights of the weak, to repay it a thousand-fold. For whilst the far more powerful nobles of those

* Matt. x. 43.

countries soon lost all they had covenanted for, and were obliged to submit to have their sovereigns become their absolute masters, the liberties of England have been most providentially preserved, and have gradually spread wider, as each class of society has become more fit to receive such blessings.

The names of those true patriots who took the lead in framing the Great Charter, or in constraining the king to ratify it, should ever be had in honor by the people of England. But such are the dangers which surround greatness, that, whilst humbler families have increased, with the growth of the nation, both in numbers and importance, these noble names have nearly all become extinct. And though the ancient baronies of that age pass on to the children of daughters in the case of a failure of male heirs, yet, even thus, the only titles of these benefactors of their country which have been preserved to our times in the possession of their descendants, are those of the Earl Marshall, and of the barons Percy, De Roos, Say, Fitzgerald, Sackville, and Zouch.

But though the nobles who obtained, from king John, the signing of Magna Charta, sought no increase of honours or wealth for themselves, they had too often witnessed his indifference to oaths and covenants not to feel it necessary, that the nation should have some farther security than his mere signature, for the observance of the terms of the Charter.

It was therefore stipulated that five-and-twenty barons should be chosen, to act as conservators of the Charter. And the king found himself obliged to consent, that, if he or his officers should violate any of its conditions; four of these twenty-five should be authorised to request that he would correct what had been thus done amiss. And if he should fail to comply with their request, within 40 days, the four barons were to call upon their col-

leagues to join in any measures, necessary to compel the king to compliance, short of an attack upon his person, or family.

This stipulation was quite needful with a man on whose integrity no confidence could possibly be placed. Indeed the king and the barons had scarcely separated, before some of the latter received information, that he was already taking measures to enable him to violate the Charter with impunity. But when they would have remonstrated with him; he took his oath to them, that he had done nothing of the kind, and had no such intentions as they suspected. Yet it was but too true, that he had already sent to several of those foreigners, whom he had preferred trusting with the government of his castles, because they had no interest in the liberties of the nation; and had desired them to collect forthwith all sorts of warlike stores. He had also given instructions to some of his courtiers to repair to the pope, and solicit him to annul the Charter. And he was preparing letters to be sent abroad, for the purpose of inviting over military adventurers; with offers of distributing amongst them the spoils and property of the English nobility.

When Innocent heard how the barons had curtailed the royal authority, in a kingdom where he had meant that the kings should henceforward be the tools of the popes, he swore, for he was very much given to such ill language, that their misbehaviour should not go unpunished. And, as a first step towards undoing what they had done so well, he and his cardinals sat in judgment on the Great Charter; and pronounced it null and void.

He next issued a proclamation, addressed ^{Aug. 24,} _{1215.} to all Christian people, in which he spoke of John as a converted character; attributed the conduct of the barons to the instigation of Satan; claimed for himself the right of deciding disputes

between them and their king ; and asserted that, as the kingdom of England was become the property of the papal see, John could neither make, nor consent to, any change in its constitution, without his permission. The pope added, that the king had nevertheless been terrified into consenting to such terms as were not only base and degrading, but illegal and unjust. 'The Lord, however,' he proceeded, 'has said to us in the prophet, *I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to build and to plant* *.'

Acting, therefore, upon the assumption, that the men of that generation were so unacquainted with Scripture as to believe that the Holy Spirit had in these words described the power which God intended to confer upon the popes, Innocent next laid a curse upon the king, if he should observe the Charter ; and upon the barons, if they should presume to require its observance, now that it was annulled and quashed by a papal sentence.

Under the same date the pope wrote to the barons, recommending them 'to show that they could make a virtue of necessity ;' by giving up Magna Charta, and making due apologies and proper satisfaction to their king. He also required them to send deputies to wait upon him, and hear, from his mouth, what laws he would allow the English nation for its future government.

To these insolent documents the barons bluntly replied, that they would not desist from what they had undertaken. And some churchman taught them to give the pope a rebuke in their turn ; reminding him in their answer, that another prophet has said, *Woe unto them which justify the wicked for a reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous* †.

After this the pope called them worse than

* Jer. i. 10.

† Isa. v. 23.

Saracens ; and ordered the archbishop to curse them with bell, book, and candle. But the patriotic Langton declined compliance with this order ; for which being suspended by Pandulf he went to Rome, with the vain hope of convincing the pope, that neither the barons nor he had done any thing deserving of condemnation. Innocent, however, confirmed the suspension ; and refused to allow of his returning to England. But the popular character and example of Langton led many others of the English clergy, to affect to consider the order of excommunication as obtained by deceiving the pope ; and therefore of no validity. Whilst the barons spoke out more boldly ; and said, that the pope had no right to interfere in lay-matters ; because the Lord had given Peter and his successors no authority, save in ecclesiastic questions. ' Where,' they exclaimed, ' will the insatiable avarice of these Romans stop ? They are successors of Constantine, not of Peter, whom they imitate not in their conduct ; nor have they any right to a power like his ; for they deserve it not. They are mere vulgar wretches, who know nothing of arms, or gallantry ; and yet would rule all the world with their excommunications ; whilst they are themselves but low-bred usurers, who have risen in the church by forbidden bribes.'

Such language betrayed the pride of the speakers, as forcibly as it expressed their disgust at the selfishness of the papal court. But a power like that of the popes, whose strength could only lie in the opinion men entertained of it, was already tottering to its downfall, when the clergy could refuse to be its blind instruments, and the nobility ventured to speak of it so contemptuously. And thus are the wicked continually *taken in the devices that they have imagined*. The crafty policy with which Innocent had watched John's follies and crimes, not to correct them, but to take advantage of his errors,

seemed for a little while to have been most triumphantly successful ; but this success had only served to open the eyes of the nation to the thorough worldliness, and the unbounded ambition of these pretended representatives of the meek and holy Jesus ; and it filled our countrymen with such a salutary jealousy of papal interference in civil matters, as never left them from this time forward ; till England also threw off the spiritual bondage of popery.

In the meanwhile king John, restless under the restraint imposed upon him, had been moving here and there ; and his subjects, at one time, believed he had begun to turn pirate. But he was
Sept. 1215. now at Dover, preparing for the transport and reception of a host of penniless knights, men ready to sell their blood and their consciences for gold, robbers and freebooters, who drawn by his promises and the hopes of plunder, were already collected in great numbers, from various quarters, on the opposite coasts of the continent.

Several thousands of these adventurers embarking from Calais, were met by a violent storm ; and, being driven to the north by the tempest, suffered shipwreck on the coasts of Suffolk and Norfolk. When their dead bodies were cast upon the shore, the number of women and children, whose corpses were mingled with the rest, convinced the English that the invaders, from whom they had thus been saved without any exertions of their own, had intended to fix their families here ; as in a conquered land, of which each combatant expected to receive his share. Yet the crowds of mercenaries, who crossed over from other ports were still numerous enough to form two armies, such as the barons were unprepared to meet in the field. To satisfy his revenge and attach these hungry hirelings to his service, John marched them over the country from the British Channel to the Forth ; encouraging them to pillage and destroy

the mansions and property of the nobles. In the morning he would set fire, with his own hands, to the house in which he had slept for the night; and, with such an example before them, his followers reduced towns and villages to ashes; robbing the unarmed countryman; and torturing the citizen, till he confessed to these robbers where he had hoped to conceal his money.

When the barons saw the king proceed in this manner, as though he had resolved to reduce England into a frightful desert, and to leave them no alternative but rebellion, or ruin and death, they made up their minds to offer the crown of England to some person capable of rescuing the country from the lawless marauders, who were thus desolating it in every direction. And as most of these foreigners were subjects of the king of France, they fixed upon his son Louis; hoping, that at his summons, half the mercenaries would immediately quit John; and that the misery of a long civil war might thus be avoided.

The pope, however, ordered the king of France to abstain from meddling with the affairs of a kingdom, subject, he said, to the Roman See. But Philip answered, that England neither did, nor ever should, belong to the pope. And he was seconded in this declaration by his nobles; who asserted, with one voice, that no king could of his own will give away his kingdom, or make it tributary to any foreign power, transferring the barons of the land like so many slaves.

In May, 1216, Louis set sail from Calais with a fleet of 680 vessels. John was on the opposite heights of Dover, with a numerous army under his command; but, never courageous except in face of the weak, he broke up his camp before the French could land; and fled across the country, spreading desolation as he went, till he had reached Bristol, and so put the whole breadth of England between

himself and his enemies. The road was thus left open to Louis, who was received with great joy in London, which the barons had hitherto kept possession of, and thereby preserved from pillage. In London, the nobility did homage to the French prince; who, in return, swore upon the Gospel to restore the authority of their good laws, and to re-instate them in all their rights and possessions.

And now England appeared about to purchase its escape from present tyranny, at no less a price than that of becoming henceforward a province of France. But from this it was saved by the timely death of king John; who was still ravaging the distant counties with a flying army, when he was made to find that though his cowardice might keep him out of reach of the sword of human vengeance, there is no way of escaping the power of God in that *day of destruction for which the wicked is reserved**, until he hath done his appointed work as the scourge, if he be such, of a sinful people.

The king was on his way from Norfolk into Lincolnshire, and had himself crossed the Wash in safety; when the train of carts which carried his plate, jewels, and treasure, coming upon a quicksand, and being thus overtaken by the tide where it meets the stream of the Welland, were all lost, with the horses and drivers.

The irritation of John, on finding himself deprived in such a manner of his valuables, had wrought him into a fever, before he reached the monastery of Swinshead; and there he indulged in large draughts of new cyder, and in eating a quantity of peaches.

The next morning he was exceedingly ill; but was conveyed in a litter to Sleaford, and thence
 Oct. 19. to Newark; where after a few days he expired, in the forty-ninth year of his age, and eighteenth of his reign.

* Job xxi. 30.

He had desired to be buried in Worcester cathedral; that St. Wulstan * might take charge of his body and soul. There his mouldered corpse was, a few years ago, exposed to view; and the cowl of a monk was found upon his head. For they who had passed their lives in the unrestrained indulgence of every passion and every lust, were then permitted by their blind guides to hope, that if their bodies were found in the supposed livery of mortification and self-denial, it might lead their all-seeing Judge to overlook what had really been their habits. Even Matthew Paris, the honest monk of St. Alban's abbey, whose faithful pen would not disguise any man's vices to flatter greatness, after relating the wickedness of John as a son, a brother, a husband, a subject, a king, and a creature born to glorify his Creator, habitually and flagrantly violating every duty towards man and towards God, finishes his history with saying, that some good works which the king did in this life, will speak 'for him before the tribunal of Christ; inasmuch as he built a monastery at Beaulieu; and, when dying, bequeathed an estate of ten pounds a year to Croxton Abbey.' So pitifully defective have the wisest men's notions of the heinousness of sin ever been, in ages or countries where the Scriptures are but little read.

But though the Almighty was thus, as it were, forgotten, He was even then visibly preparing blessings for generations which should again be taught to honour His holy word.

Perhaps in no period of English history were the events which occurred, and the characters of those who took the lead in them, more undeniably beneficial in the end, to the great interests of our nation, than in this reign. And yet human wisdom would certainly never have devised such means for benefiting any country, as subjecting it to a foolish and

* See p. 277.

wicked monarch like John; and exposing it at the same time, to such politic and powerful enemies of its prosperity and independence, as Philip and pope Innocent.

The crimes and the cowardice of king John, combined with the abilities and unscrupulous ambition of Philip, were first useful to England, by separating from it the greater part of those French provinces which had been subject to king Henry II. Had they remained in the possession of the kings of England, the revenues raised on one side of the channel would have been employed to enslave the other, by monarchs greedy of power; and a prudent use of the domains which he inherited in France, would probably have enabled John, or his successors, to conquer that kingdom. In which case England would have been deserted by its sovereigns for the richer country; and a monarch uniting the resources of both kingdoms, might have erected a despotic government over the whole of Europe; making it easy for the pope, by an alliance with him, to keep all souls enslaved.

Instead of such a disastrous extension of their dominions, the kings of England began, from this period, to be Englishmen again; sharing, in many respects, the same feelings and same interests as their subjects. And the pecuniary wants of its sovereigns, after they ceased to have any sources of income from abroad, enabled the English to purchase some of the most valuable parts of our constitution, in a peaceable manner, by making them the conditions on which supplies of money were granted.

It has been already observed how useful was Innocent's encroaching spirit; first, in leading him to force upon the king an able and patriotic statesman, as head of the English Church; and then, in tempting him to abuse his influence, till he had taught all classes to be jealous of the papal power.

Lastly, all these things worked together, with the

weakness and wickedness of John, to bring about the demand, and the concession of a charter of liberties, so drawn up that the nobles and people should, henceforward, have a common interest in upholding its authority.

The arrival at a period from which the kings of England were to cease being foreigners ; the first symptoms of a general abhorrence of papal tyranny, since its establishment ; and the signature of Magna Charta, form an important æra in the growth of our national constitution. They are like the first glimpses of the dawn ; but there was still a long hour of darkness to be passed. At this time, indeed, the natives of Spain, and still more those of Italy, had far brighter prospects than our forefathers ; but the night returned upon them ; and their loss should force us to acknowledge, with overflowing hearts, that to the free bounty of God alone we owe it, that our more favoured country reposes in light and liberty. The same mercy which has been seen, so conspicuously, sowing the seeds of all our present blessings, was equally needed to provide instruments, who should water the plants ; and it was as graciously afforded to give the increase ; or we should never have tasted the fruits.

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